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From '*athleta Dei*' to '*miles Christi*': The Development of Institutional Support for the Conversion of Northern Europe (800-1200)

By

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Abstract: Between the years 800 and 1200, Latin Christendom underwent a radical period of expansion as new lands and peoples were Christianized. This period included the conversion of Scandinavia to Christianity and the Baltic Crusades against Slavic peoples. The means of converting individuals and groups changed dramatically over the course of these few centuries. This thesis demonstrates that paying close attention to the various forms of institutional support that missionary activities received, as recorded in contemporary accounts from across the period, reveals previously unnoticed factors that made conversion efforts possible. The changing availability of institutional support however, depended directly on the shifting nature of political and ecclesiastical institutions within Latin Christendom, changes which would forever alter the realms beyond its boundaries. In particular, the development of canon law, crusade ideology, sacral kingship, and the increasing power of the state made possible military, financial, and spiritual support of missionaries in ways inconceivable before the year 1100. These developments help explain the transformation of the missionary bishop from wandering preacher to holy warrior, as well as sharpening the contrast between the peaceful conversion of Scandinavia around the year 1000 and the coercive conversion of the Baltic Slavs around the year 1200.

I. Introduction

When Saint Ansgar, who would come to be known as the Apostle of the North for his evangelization efforts in Scandinavia, embarked on the first missionary journey to that region in 826, he took with him his fellow monk Autbert, but otherwise, "they had none to render them any menial service, as no one in the abbot's household would go with them of his own accord, and he would compel no one to go against his will."[1] Around the same time, some other early missionary priests from the German church encountered resistance to their preaching in Scandinavia, including some who were martyred and others who were driven from Sweden by force.[2] In response to this opposition, neither the church nor the state supporting the Christianization effort marshaled any resources to respond, but rather, Ansgar travelled to Sweden alone, where the priest Nithard had recently been martyred and where his fellow bishop, Gaudbert, was too scared to return. For this deed, Ansgar was praised as 'God's athlete.'

Just a few centuries later, in contrast to Ansgar, who accomplished most of his missionary deeds alone, another key actor in the conversion of Northern Europe, the missionary priest Otto of Bamberg, always travelled in company. In 1125 when he met with resistance to his preaching in the town of Szczecin in Pomerania (modern-day northern Poland), he appealed to Duke Bolesław III of Poland who marshalled an army to come to his aid immediately, employing the threat of violence. According to a contemporaneous life of Otto,

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[1] Bishop Rimbert, *Life of Anskar, The Apostle of the North, 801-865* trans. Charles H. Robinson (London: SPCK, 1921) chapter VII. translated from *Vita Anskarii auctore Rimberto*, ed. Georg Waitz (Hannover: impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1884): "*Dimissi itaque ab imperatore, nullum habuerunt socium, qui eis aliquid servitii impenderet, quoniam nemo ex familia abbatis cum eis sua sponte ire, nec ille quemquam ad hoc invitum volebat cogere*," 29.

[2] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschan (New York: NY: University of Columbia Press, 1959) 26-27. Translated from *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. Johann Lappenberg and Georg Waitz (Hannover: impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1876): "*Tunc quoque Gaudbertus episcopus zelo gentilium a Sueonia depulsus, et Nithardus, capellanus eius, martyrio coronatus est cum aliis*," 20.

> Others from the duke's side arrived with them, carrying both harsh mandates for the pagans and pleasing ones for the bishop. For they said that their lord was moved with the appropriate indignation when he learned that they were harassing the bishop with all sorts of injuries, and he warned them that by no means should the bishop have any trouble thereafter. Otherwise, he would arrive with an army as quickly as possible and exact the greatest revenge upon them in the custom of victors. But if they consented to listen to the bishop and to receive the word of God, they would suffer no harm from him or any of his men. On the contrary, they would have perpetual peace, just like other Christians.[3]

Clearly, something had changed since Ansgar's day, when there was no one for him to call upon for aid, neither during his first trip to Scandinavia, nor when his fellow missionaries met with violent local resistance to their preaching. New forms of support for missionary activities had become available by Otto of Bamberg's day, such that he could complain to Duke Bolesław about local opposition and not only expect, but also receive, a response in the form of military action.

This development would continue into the Baltic Crusades. To take another case, let us compare Albert of Buxhövden, the Bishop of Livonia, to Ansgar and Otto, who came before him. By the end of the same century in which Otto performed his missionary journeys, Albert led a fleet of 23 ships filled with over 1,500 armed crusaders, into the mission field. Many of these holy warriors would eventually become members of the Sword Brethren, an order Albert himself founded, inaugurating "the perpetual crusade" against the heathen.[4] In just a few centuries missionary bishops had changed from 'Athletes of God' for their individual daring deeds beyond the peripheries of Christendom to 'Knights of Christ' for their military actions performed in the company of many warriors. This transformation in the character of the missionary was only

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[3] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg, by a Monk of Prüfening," 126, in *Noble Society: Five Lives from Twelfth-Century Germany*, trans. Jonathan R. Lyon, Manchester Medieval Sources (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 92–149.

[4] Henricus, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, trans. James A. Brundage (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 36; Stephen Turnbull, *Crusader Castles of the Teutonic Knights. 2: The Stone Castles of Latvia and Estonia 1185 - 1560* (Oxford: Osprey, 2004).

made possible by prerequisite transformations in the institutions within Latin Christendom, including the development of crusade ideology which eventually found its grounding in canon law, and the increasing power of kings and princes, such that they could financially and militarily back conversion efforts.

While early missionaries to Scandinavia like Ansgar, Autbert, Gauzbert, and the third archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, a successor of Ansgar's, Archbishop Unni, had no one to call on for aid on the frontiers of Europe, Bishop Otto could employ the threat of force from powerful dukes within Christendom, and eventually Albert would do more than merely threaten violence. He would enact it in the form of holy war. Thus, the strategies of mission employed in the Christianization process of Northern Europe developed significantly in a few short centuries. What began with poorly resourced, itinerant preachers who depended on the favor and permission of local leaders for the success of their evangelization efforts ended in the Baltic Crusades, waged contrary to the wishes of local rulers, culminating a gradual development which Alan Murray describes as "the tumultuous and increasingly warlike character of the process of Christianization."[5]

Scholarship abounds on the conversion of northern Europe, a topic which received significant attention early in the twentieth century in works like Thompson's "The German Church and the Conversion of the Baltic Slavs"[6] and Addison's *The Medieval Missionary: A Study of the Conversion of Northern Europe*.[7] These older studies laid the groundwork for the

[5] Alan V. Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia, 1185-1227," in *Missionaries and Evangelization in Late Antique and Medieval Europe (4th-13th Centuries)*, ed. E. Piazza (Verona: Alteritas - Interazione tra i popoli, 2016), 354.
[6] James Westfall Thompson, "The German Church and the Conversion of the Baltic Slavs," *The American Journal of Theology* 20, no. 3 (1916): 372–89.
[7] James Thayer Addison, *The Medieval Missionary: A Study of the Conversion of Northern Europe, A.D. 500-1300*, (New York: International Missionary Council, 1936).

field. Most notably among recent work on the topic, Ian Wood's landmark study *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelization of Europe 400-1050*, thoroughly examines the expansion of Latin Christendom via its primary agents, missionary bishops.[8] But as Haki Antonsson points out, scholarship on missionaries to Scandinavia "has traditionally attracted the attention of Carolingian experts."[9] Named the most important British historian of Francia, Ian Wood is no exception. While his book-length study on medieval missionary evangelization of the European continent represents the most important work on the present topic, unfortunately, he confines the scope of his book to Early-Medieval Europe, primarily examining Anglo-Saxon, Merovingian, and Carolingian missionary activities (600-900). As such, while the first generation of missionaries sent out from the church at Hamburg-Bremen to evangelize Northern Europe, namely Ansgar in 826, do fall under Wood's expert gaze, the later missionary ventures with which this paper is also concerned do not. The years following the period Wood confines his study constitute those in which the most significant transformations of missionary strategy and methods of conversion occurred. Thus, extending the work of Wood and others via a comparative and diachronic analysis of chronicles and *Vitæ* written on the frontiers of Latin Christendom from the first missions to Scandinavia (ninth century) all the way up to the advent of the Baltic Crusades (thirteenth century) reveal significant shifts in the strategies of conversion, the figure of the missionary, and the forms of support which conversion efforts received. These shifts in turn betray transformations of institutions and ideologies within Latin Christendom, including the networks and roles of courtier bishops, the fluctuating power of the Holy Roman Emperor, and the dual developments of crusade ideology and canon law. The present analysis proceeds by

[8] Ian N. Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (London: Routledge, 2014).
[9] Haki Antonsson, "The Conversion and Christianization of Scandinavia: A Critical Review of Recent Scholarly Writings," in *Conversion and Identity in the Viking Age*, ed. Ildar Hajdarovič Garipzanov (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 51, 54.

tracing alterations in the forms of support which conversion efforts received, finding a gradual increase in the militaristic nature of conversion efforts, and attributes these alterations to the aforementioned developments within the institutions of church and state which backed the missionary endeavors.

A few recent works have also compared a similar primary source base of chronicles and saints lives from across the missionary period in Northern Europe (800-1200) as the present study attempts, namely Wojtek Jezierski's "Risk Societies on the Frontier: Missionary and Emotional Communities in the Southern Baltic, Eleventh - Thirteenth Centuries," which compares "Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (mid-1070s), Helmold of Bosau's *Chronica Slavorum* (c. 1168-1172), and Henry of Livonia's (Henricus Lettus's) *Chronicon Livoniæ* (c. 1224-1227)" on their presentation of the missionary's experience of emotion, especially *timor* (fear).[10] Another recent work which provides precedent for such a comparative approach between these particular sources is Linda Kaljundi's excellent dissertation "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory," which "examine[s] Latin missionary historiography from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, concentrating on the chronicles related to the archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen … [with] closest attention … being paid to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, … [but also includes] the chronicles of Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau, and Arnold of Lübeck."[11] To these chronicles, the present study adds the *Vitæ* of St. Otto of Bamberg and St. Ansgar, both of which paint a vivid picture of missionary life and conversion activity on the frontiers of Christendom.

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[10] Wojtek Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier: Missionary and Emotional Communities in the Southern Baltic, Eleventh - Thirteenth Centuries," 157, in *Imagined Communities on the Baltic Rim: From the Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Wojtek Jezierski and Lars Hermanson (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 155–90.
[11] Linda Kaljundi, "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory: Studies on Historical Representation, Rituals, and Recollection of the Past" (Doctoral Thesis, Helsinki, University of Helsinki, 2016) 3; 14-15.

This study asks the question 'what kinds of support did conversion efforts and missionary journeys receive in northern Europe?' This question has been gestured to by Ian Wood and the late Birgit Sawyer, one of the most important scholars of the last 40 years on the topic of medieval Scandinavia, including the Christianization process.[12] But neither Sawyer nor Wood engage in any systematic analysis of institutional support of missionary journeys. Wood notes that "the history of missionaries is itself an important topic" and that central to it, "at a straightforwardly practical level there is the matter of resources and backing."[13] He provides us the theoretical example of "a Merovingian bishop in northern Gaul [who] might meet local opposition, but ultimately he had the power of a Christian king behind him. There was no such security in a region which had not accepted Christianity officially."[14] Unfortunately, Wood does not explore what kinds of resources or backing missionaries did draw on in pagan regions or on the frontiers, and yet, these ventures did happen, changing the course of European history forever. Someone had to fund, provision, and commission every evangelical expedition. Birgit Sawyer claims "the conversion to Christianity was a long drawn-out process that had little to do with the political events that we read about in the conversion histories" but then adds as a concession that,

> of course, the missionaries first had to make contact with those in power before attempting to preach in a district; in order to evangelize they needed protection, shelter, and support. The first priority was to proclaim the gospel, and a later stage in the process was to build churches and provide for their maintenance. The fact that numerous churches were built in many parts of Scandinavia during the eleventh century shows, however, that there must have been many local leaders who were willing to encourage the spread of Christianity.[15]

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[12] See the work of B. Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, both experts Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, including Birgit Sawyer and P. H. Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[13] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 4.
[14] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 4.
[15] Birgit Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12/13 (1988): 59.

Thus, she herself notes that an essential element in the success of missionary journeys and the subsequent Christianization of a region were the various forms of institutional support, from grants of permission to preach, to martial protection, to monetary aid, just to name a few. This paper asserts with her that "Christianity spread in Scandinavia thanks to the initiative and work not just of individual kings or bishops, but of many people, men and women" and the institutions they comprised.[16]

The present study demonstrates, however, by a close reading and comparison of missionary historiography across the Christianization period, that the various forms of institutional support which successful conversion efforts required where inherently tied up in "the political events that we read about in the conversion histories."[17] If the institutional support for missions had little to do with the petty stuff of politics, as Sawyer suggests, then why do these "political events" feature so prominently in the contemporary records of conversion left to the historian? Medieval historians have learned that if a chronicler gives priority to an event in his narrative, then it must have been significant to him or someone in his circle. While chronicles are by no means treated as straightforward records of events (see below), our authors perceived a direct connection between the involvement, or lack thereof, of both church and state in ongoing conversion efforts and the results of these efforts.

A New Institutional approach reintroduces the significance of political and ideological circumstances within Latin Christendom to the processes unfolding beyond its borders. Such a view only emerges from a diachronic analysis that detects the gradual changes over time in how conversion was understood and undertaken, as well as the development of the role of the

[16] Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 60.
[17] Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 59.

missionary from itinerant preacher, to courtier bishop, to holy warrior. A comparative analysis between sources spanning the Christianization period uncovers sharp contrasts between the peaceful conversion of Scandinavia and the later coercive subjugation of the Baltic Slavs. At the same time, putting a wide array of contemporary conversion accounts in conversation with one another highlights the shifting nature of the institutions which backed these conversion efforts. Attending to key transformations in these institutions reveals parallel shifts in the methods employed by missionaries. These shifts became possible only as institutions developed sufficiently to support conversion efforts through the application of force and violence, a phenomenon that occurred with increasing frequency in the build-up to the Baltic Crusades.

This study finds the shifts that are most significant for the conduct of the conversion of Northern Europe, occurred between the years 1000 and 1200, a period in which current scholarship of missionary experience has left a gap. The New Institutional approach also suggests some plausible reasons why the largely peaceful character of conversion efforts in Scandinavia emerge as distinct from the violent conversion of southern and eastern Europe by the crusades. The evidence suggests that the conversion of Scandinavia, which occurred on the early end of this period of transition, was largely complete before large-scale military involvement in conversion efforts became possible, either materially or ideologically, as a form of institutional support of the missionary endeavor. However, military aid was one of many forms of institutional support that became increasingly available and routine during Otto of Bamberg's journeys and the subsequent efforts among the Baltic Slavs, an increase reflected in the medieval sources themselves and their presentation of the missionary figure.

II. The Evidentiary Base: Narrators of Conversion and Conversion Narratives

The genre of the medieval chronicle represents a challenge for historians because the authors of these texts, usually churchmen, were themselves historians narrating their own pasts and interpreting the key events, as they saw them, which led up to their own day. For example, Adam of Bremen penned his *Gesta* between c. 1074-81, but is concerned with relating events from the early 800s, centuries before.[18] Due to the form of the chronicle genre, Helmold, Arnold, and other medieval authors would follow the same pattern. Naturally, despite claims of veracity, the chronicle is anything but a straightforward record of events, but rather is one historian's narration of events, often a providentialist one, and therefore reflects the concerns of his own day. Far from rendering the sources useless to the historian however, this reality makes them incredibly rich as windows into the way conversion and other social processes were understood by those who lived through them.

Adam of Bremen, who called himself "the least of the canons of the holy Church at Bremen" lived in the eleventh century in an important trade center which gave him access to information from sailors he otherwise could not have known.[19] He also had the Danish king, Svein Estrithson (Sweyn II) as his informant for details of his history. In addition to these sources of information, Adam had at his disposal the significant library of the cathedral chapter at Bremen, which included "the biographies of early missionaries, such as those of Boniface, Ansgar, Liudger, Radbod, Rimbert, Willehad, and Willibrord," all of whom he draws upon in crafting his narrative.[20] He also cites the *Vita Karoli* of Einhard whom he held in high regard as an authority, as well as the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours and *Annales Fuldenses*.[21]

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[18] Francis J. Tschan, "Introduction," xvi, in *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*.
[19] Tschan, "Introduction," xiii, xv.
[20] Tschan, "Introduction," xvii.
[21] Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, Book 1. III, IX-XI; Tschan, "Introduction," xvii.

By Adam's own day the sees of Hamburg and Bremen had long since been merged, by act of the emperor in 848,[22] and thus Adam lived and wrote positioned within institutions designed to serve as vehicles for the spread of Christianity to both Scandinavia and the Slavic territories. Hamburg-Bremen would remain the key institution behind the conversion of those regions during our period of analysis, giving Adam and his successors front row seats to these processes.[23] Adam wrote his *Gesta* during a period when questions had been raised, especially by the involvement of competing bishoprics, over the authority of the Hamburg-Bremen diocese, making Adam's primary motive in constructing his narrative an attempt to re-assert his church's importance.[24]

Helmold of Bosau extended Adam's chronicle into a later period, writing from "a small missionary outpost in Wagria" which "allowed Helmold to be deeply involved in the daily practice of Christianization."[25] Jezierski notes that "his point of view, unlike Adam's … was individual, supported by the personal experience of missionizing. As suggested by Volker Scior, Helmold was guided by a desire to contribute, with an accurate description of the Slavs as the object of his evangelical concern."[26] During Helmold's own day, the primary strategy of conversion employed by the German church was still the sending out of individual missionaries, but crusade was beginning to become the vehicle of Christianization, although mass violence was still the exception at this time. Helmold's life overlapped with the period in which large-

[22] A privilege later confirmed by Pope Nicholas in 864, see Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 23, 31.
[23] Kaljundi, "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory," 18.
[24] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[25] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[26] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158; Volker Scior, *Das Eigene Und Das Fremde: Identität Und Fremdheit in Den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau Und Arnolds von Lübeck*, Orbis Mediaevalis, Bd. 4 (Berlin: Akademie, 2002) 138-146, 186-191; see also: Linda Kaljundi, "Medieval Conceptualisations of the Baltic Sea Region: Performing the Frontier in Helmold of Bosau's 'Chronicle of the Slavs,'" in *Baltic Frontier Revisited: Power Structures and Cross Cultural Interactions in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Imbi Sooman and Stefan Donecker (Wien: University of Vienna, 2009), 25–40.

scale military action became the primary means employed in Conversion efforts, especially after the Crusade against the Wends, inaugurated in 1147.[27]

The Chronicle of Arnold of Lübeck, an abbot of the Benedictine convent of St. John, picks up in 1171, where Helmold's chronicle left off, and ends in the year 1210, extending the previous writers' work into his own day.[28] His chronicle, however, focuses primarily on Mediterranean theatres of crusade and as such, receives the least attention in the present study.[29] Additionally, Arnold's primary focus was not mission, but rather, "a large proportion of the text discusses the German politics both home and abroad in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries."[30] As such, it represents a useful source for gaining insight into developing circumstances within the institutions of Latin Christendom during the crusade, from which future research could benefit. His positionality on the crusading frontier dictates Arnold's perspective, located as he was in Lübeck, a primary staging ground for the movement of German merchants and crusaders into the Baltic, as well as a locus of colonization into the region.

Henry of Livonia's Chronicle has received the most attention in Anglophone scholarship of the conversion of the Baltic Sea region, since for many decades, this sub-field was dominated by military historians of the crusading orders,[31] attracted to Henry as an essential source on the *Fratres militiæ Christi Livoniæ*, or Sword Brothers (*Schwertbrüderorden*), and "the only

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[27] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[28] Kaljundi, "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory," 37.
[29] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[30] Kaljundi, "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory," 38.
[31] See Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier 1100 – 1525* (London: Mamillan, 1980); William L. Urban, *The Baltic Crusade*, 2nd ed., (Chicago, Ill: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 1994); and the works of Alan V. Murray including: "The Sword Brothers at War: Observations on the Military Activity of the Knighthood of Christ in the Conquest of Livonia and Estonia (1203-1227)," *Ordines Militares: Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders* 18 (2013): 27–37; *The North-Eastern Frontiers of Medieval Europe: The Expansion of Latin Christendom in the Baltic Lands*, ed. by Murray AV, The Expansion of Latin Europe, 1000-1500 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier*, ed. by Murray AV (Ashgate, 2009); *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150-1500*, ed. by Murray AV (Ashgate, 2001).

preserved contemporary narrative history about the Livonian crusade."[32] Henry, as an authorial figure, perfectly represents the culmination of the process of transformation in varieties of institutional support that missionaries received because he "composed his *Chronica* in an era when the crusading military industry has [*sic*] recently become synonymous with Christianization."[33] Thus, his chronicle marks the concluding moment of this present study. Henry's chronicle is a particularly rich source for the turn toward crusade because he himself observed the mobilization of large-scale military expeditions and "provides a vivid record of the experiences and impressions of a contemporary witness who was personally involved in this vast movement."[34]

Medieval hagiography or *vitæ* present similar challenges to the historian as medieval chronicles. These saints' lives are far from factual biographical accounts, since they existed for another purpose: namely serving as moral exempla for their audience as well as presenting the deeds of the holy man in as 'saintly' a light as possible in order to encourage devotion to that individual. The medieval biographers employed a variety of literary *topoi* from earlier hagiographical works such as the lives of St. Martin of Tours as well as the patterns of the apostles and other biblical figures. However, this need not discourage the historian from utilizing these valuable sources, for within Christendom, the powerful ethic of *imitatio Christi* meant that not only did saints see themselves within the patterns established by the life of Christ and the

[32] Kaljundi, "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory," 39.
[33] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[34] James A. Brundage, "Introduction," xv, in *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, trans. James A. Brundage (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003).

apostles, but they actually imitated these exemplars by their actions.[35] Likewise, the narrators of the deeds of saints wrote their *vitæ* in imitation of biblical narratives, but that does not negate the power of *imitatio*.[36] Saints lived within and inhabited the stories of prior holy men, such that they often did repeat the deeds of others.[37] Rich with vivid detail of life on the frontiers of Christendom and of medieval missionary activity, *Vitæ* are of immense value to the present study.

In particular, the *Vita Anskarii*, penned by Bishop Rimbert, the second bishop of the diocese of Hamburg-Bremen and direct successor of St. Ansgar, Apostle of the North, relates the several missionary journeys of Ansgar to Scandinavia. Rimbert, Ansgar's "closest companion" wrote it not centuries after the fact, but as an eyewitness to Ansgar's life and deeds.[38] The text

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[35] For the most significant and up-to-date volume on the subject, see *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500–1500*, ed. Samantha Kahn Herrick (Brill, 2020). This edited volume examines the creation, use, reuse, and value of Hagiography to medieval historians. Contents include submissions on many of hagiography's real social ramifications in the medieval world, from producing healthcare systems to altering individual behavior through so-called "cultivation of the self" to "defining religious institutions" and directing their *regulae*.

[36] Éric Rebillard, *The Early Martyr Narratives: Neither Authentic Accounts nor Forgeries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020). Rebillard articulates a view of hagiography as "living-texts" which their audiences would have interfaced without clear, modern distinctions between fact and fiction.

[37] The real social and behavioral ramifications of the ethic of *imitatio* paired with the manufacture of *exempla* for imitation, disseminated as they were in hagiography, the most popular reading genre of the Middle Ages, can be explained from multiple theoretical directions. (1) Max Weber articulated this phenomenon in terms of his concept "life conduct." Religions and their value systems imposed "ethical prerogatives," or made certain patterns of behavior normative, which individuals strove to live up to. The result was that religion produced "the combination of a mental outlook and pattern of social action" which in turn resulted in a "permanent habitus (*Lebensführung*) [or] life conduct." Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* trans. Stephen Kalberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Lutz Kaelber, "Weber's Lacuna: Medieval Religion and the Roots of Rationalization," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, no. 3 (1996): 465–85. (2) From another theoretical perspective, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* has been employed by Alan Kreider to explain how the normative demands of Christianity shaped and altered the behavior of Roman citizens into a distinctively Christian *habitus*. Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016). In the medieval period, the imitation of saints could be seen to have the same effect. (3) And lastly, Linda Kaljundi's concept of "performing" presents another theoretical explanation for the behavior-altering effect of medieval hagiography. Individuals who strove to 'live within' the stories of holy men can be seen as "performing" those hagiographical narratives, the result being patterns of action which give rise to social realities. Linda Kaljundi, "Medieval Conceptualisations of the Baltic Sea Region: Performing the Frontier in Helmold of Bosau's 'Chronicle of the Slavs,'" in *Baltic Frontier Revisited: Power Structures and Cross Cultural Interactions in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Imbi Sooman and Stefan Donecker (Wien: University of Vienna, 2009), 25–40.

[38] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 161.

relates crucial information on how the first missions to the North functioned and what varieties of support conversion efforts in the Carolingian period received, both from institutions within Latin Christendom and among "the remotest peoples."[39] Ian Wood intones that "to understand that [strategies of mission] one must turn to Rimbert and the Carolingian chroniclers, despite their biases and misunderstandings. Rimbert at least had visited Scandinavia; presumably with Anskar he had travelled to Birka. If so, his account of the settlement may be the only first-hand account of a pagan centre in ninth-century literature."[40] And Birgit Sawyer, typically a skeptic towards the veracity of the contemporary conversion narratives, adds "whatever the 'facts' behind Rimbert's story, it probably gives us a truer picture of the conversion process than any of the later histories."[41] Additionally, the *Vita Anskarii* serves a crucial role in any study of missionary historiography of the period because "for centuries, the *Vita Anskarii* constituted a crucial reading in the episcopal palaces of Hamburg-Bremen, Lübeck, Oldenburg, and, possibly, at Segeberg," making it the formative text for the chroniclers' imaginations of mission and conversion, as well as their modes of discourse and narration.[42] More than any other source, the Life of St. Ansgar shaped the intellectual milieu of the northern-German episcopal institutions which produced the missionary historiography across the period.

Similarly, the *Ottovita* authored by the Prüfening monk constitutes another essential primary source in the present study for its "vivid picture of life along the religious frontier of north-eastern Europe during the twelfth century" and its account of the strategies employed in conversion efforts, as well as the insight it provides into the varieties of institutional support

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[39] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 22.
[40] Ian Wood, "Christians and Pagans in Ninth Century Scandinavia," in *The Christianization of Scandinavia: Report of a Symposium Held at Kungälv, Sweden 4-9 August 1985*, ed. Birgit Sawyer and P. H. Sawyer (Alingsås, Sweden: Viktoria Bokförlag, 1987) 53.
[41] Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 60.
[42] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 159.

from powerful people at home and abroad.[43] Three lives of Bishop Otto of Bamberg exist today, but the present study primarily makes use of the Prüfening monk's, since the current scholarly consensus holds it to be the oldest.[44] Comparisons to Ebo and Herbord's *Ottovitæ* will occur where necessary. The Prüfening monk may not have himself accompanied Bishop Otto, but lived and wrote early enough, and presents information detailed enough, that he likely drew on the accounts of Otto's companions in the mission field.[45] This source appears curiously absent from Anglophone scholarship on the conversion of Northern Europe, and the few scholars who do make use of it have not utilized it in comparison with other missionary historiography of the period.[46] Comparing these several contemporary *chronica* documenting the Christianization of the North in conversation with the *Vitæ* of Otto of Bamberg and St. Ansgar reveals changes in the forms of institutional support which missionaries received and the strategies of conversion utilized. Contrary to some current scholarship, this analysis then asserts a connection between the changes in institutional support and missionary strategy with concurrent changes in the political and ecclesiastical institutions of Latin Christendom. Doing so identifies new causal factors in the conversion of Northern Europe itself, helps explain regional variations between the conversion of Scandinavia and that of the Baltic Slavs, and reveals the utility of medieval missionary historiography.

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[43] Jonathan R. Lyon, "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg, by a Monk of Prüfening," in *Noble Society: Five Lives from Twelfth-Century Germany*, trans. Jonathan R. Lyon, Manchester Medieval Sources (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 93.

[44] For an introduction to the textual tradition of the *Ottovitæ* see Jonathan R. Lyon, "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg."

[45] Lyon, "The Life of Bishop Otto," 96.

[46] See, for example, Klaus Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I of Bamberg and the Crusade Movement of the Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries," in *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 1992), 13–23. Typical of scholars who discuss the *Ottovitæ*, the oldest of the 3 accounts is ignored, likely because an English translation and edition has only recently been produced.

III. Source Criticism: The Pendulum of Skepticism

Early scholarship on these primary sources tended to take them at face value as factual accounts of the conversion of Northern Europe. Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, for example, together with the *Vita Anskarii* formed all conventional histories of the Christianization of Scandinavia. Georg Dehio's foundational study of Hamburg-Bremen's mission "believed Adam was an objective chronicler and his narrative was very balanced."[47] Walter Gustavus Carlson produced one of the earliest full-length English-language studies of Ansgar as a missionary figure which attempts to reconstruct the historical details of his travel to and time in Scandinavia for his thesis as one of the first graduates from the University of Chicago's Divinity School. Typical of the scholarship of the period, Carlson read the sources rather literally.[48] Charles Robinson translated the *Vita Anskarii* in 1921 noting in his introduction to the series of 'missionary biographies' that the sources "enable us to apprehend the conditions under which the Gospel was first preached to the various nations of Europe, while at the, same time they throw light upon the missionary problems which their successors in the Mission Field of today are called upon to solve."[49] Robinson's translation skills fortunately exceeded those of his source criticism. Robinson notes that both Adam and Rimbert attribute many miracles to Ansgar, a power which the missionary admittedly never claimed for himself, but Robinson so firmly holds to the source's veracity that

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[47] Lukas Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia in the Viking Era: Religious Change in Adam of Bremen's Historical Work*, Beyond Medieval Europe (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2021) xi; See Dehio, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Hamburg–Bremen bis zum Ausgang der Mission*. 2 vols. (Berlin: Hertz, 1877).

[48] Walter Gustavus Carlson, "Ansgar: His Life and Labors in Denmark and Sweden" (University of Chicago Divinity School, Summer Quarter 1896).

[49] C.H. Robinson, "Introduction to the Series," in *Life of Anskar, The Apostle of the North, 801-865* trans. Charles H. Robinson (London: SPCK, 1921).

he claims "there is *no reason for doubting* that the tradition which Adam quotes *represents what actually occurred*" in reference to the miraculous healings.[50]

In the 20th century, scholarship took a turn in which historians became particularly interested in the goals of the chronicler in constructing his narrative, hoping that by identifying these authorial biases, the real facts would emerge from the sources. Grzybowski, in the most up to date review of the literature on Adam of Bremen lists some of the best-known examples:

> Bernhard Schmeidler, Aage Trommer, Anne Kristensen, Henrik Janson, Volker Scior, David Fraesdorff, and Thies Jarecki… Although these studies have analyzed the *Gesta Hammaburgensis* from different perspectives, there is a connecting theme to almost all of them: the question of whether Adam's writings can be trusted as a source of information regarding the Christianization of Scandinavia in the High Middle Ages. Historians like Trommer, Janson, or Rudolf Buchner were especially concerned with establishing whether or not Adam of Bremen's narrative corresponds to the reality of past experiences in northern Europe, and to what degree he "distorted" or "adjusted" the objective events to present a narrative that conformed to his worldviews.[51]

Recent work from Anders Winroth and Henrik Janson have continued in this vein, screening Adam's *Gesta* in particular for biases in order to discover the past as it really happened amid Adam's misrepresentations of the past. For example, in his excellent study *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, Winroth makes clear an awareness that "Adam wants the conversion to be a result of German intervention the better to defend the rights of his own (German) church in Bremen over Christianity in Scandinavia," calling this Adam's "agenda," but he still makes extensive use of details from Adam's account as evidence to support his own arguments, namely that local Scandinavian actors had agency in the Christianization process.[52] Likewise, when Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* mentions a Christian widow who lived among the pagans in Birka, Sweden, Winroth

[50] Robinson, "Introduction to Life of Anskar," in *Life of Anskar, The Apostle of the North*.
[51] Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia* (2021) xi-xii.
[52] Anders Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

interprets Ansgar to be relaying a factual account, taking her presence and residence in Sweden as textual proof of the trade route between Birka and Dorestad.[53] Henrik Janson, in his chapter "Adam of Bremen and the Conversion of Scandinavia" examines the plausibility of Adam's description of the pagan temple at Uppsala. While he concludes that it could not have existed as Adam describes it, his chapter screens the text for these sorts of errors but ultimately treats the *Gesta* as a reliable account.[54] These two scholars, Winroth and Janson, occupy a minority position in 21st century scholarship on the primary source base for the Conversion of Scandinavia, however, for retaining an interest in the past as it really happened. The goal of their source criticism is to salvage the texts for what value they do have to the historian, since they are the only written records of such a significant social, cultural, political, and religious phenomenon in the history of Northern Europe.

However, most historians since the mid-20th century in regard to these sources have been disinterested in their value as historical accounts. In reaction to the errors of uncritical and overly-accepting early scholarship which formed the first narratives surrounding the rise of Christianity in the North, the pendulum swung the other way towards a radical source skepticism. This turn in the scholarship saw the sources as literary accounts, rather than historical ones, and took interest not in their veracity, or lack thereof, but in issues of authorship, identity, and narration. Grzybowski lists "David Fraesdorff, Volker Scior, Hans-Werner Goetz, and, to some degree, Thies Jarecki" as authors whose studies of Adam of Bremen in particular which "have also adopted this perspective."[55] Scior utilized the *Gesta* to interrogate how medieval

[53] Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, 91-92; Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 44-46.
[54] Henrik Janson, "Adam of Bremen and the Conversion of Scandinavia," in *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. Guyda Armstrong and I. N. Wood (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000) 83–88.
[55] Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, xiii.

authors participated in the construction of identity categories and the "othering" of Scandinavian peoples.[56] Likewise, Fraesdorff took interest in the ways Adam of Bremen, as an author, contributed to the understanding of Nordic peoples as "barbaric."[57] Goetz also examined Adam as author, particularly the ways in which he constructed the past and "otherness."[58] Goetz describes this turn in the scholarship nicely in his chapter on Adam of Bremen by saying "we have become more, and sometimes even extremely, suspicious of historiographical reports as far as their reliability with regard to a 'factual reality' is concerned."[59]

Not one of the aforementioned historians makes any attempt to utilize information in Adam's chronicle as evidence in a causal argument about historical events, let alone provide an explanation for the conversion of Scandinavia. One of today's leading historians of medieval Norway, Sverre Bagge, has elsewhere analyzed the Europeanization of Scandinavia, including its Christianization in relation to state formation,[60] so he apparently does not consider causal reasoning in history to be a fruitless project. Yet in his own study of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, "Deterioration of Character as Described by Adam of Bremen," he too capitulates to the trend in question. He confines his analysis of the source exclusively to Adam's authorial goals in Book III

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[56] Volker Scior, *Das Eigene Und Das Fremde: Identität Und Fremdheit in Den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau Und Arnolds von Lübeck* (Berlin: Akademie, 2002); Grzybowski, xiii.
[57] David Fraesdorff, *Der barbarische Norden: Vorstellungen und Fremdheitskategorien bei Rimbert, Thietmar von Merseburg, Adam von Bremen und Helmold von Bosau* (Berlin: Akademie, 2005); Grzybowski, xiii.
[58] Hans-Werner Goetz, "Constructing the Past: Religious Dimensions and Historical Consciousness in Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*." In *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c. 1000–1300)*. Ed. Lars B. Mortensen, 17–51. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006); Goetz, "Geschichtsschreibung und Recht: Zur rechtlichen Legitimierung des Bremer Erzbistums in der Chronik Adams von Bremen." In *Recht und Alltag im Hanseraum: Gerhard Theuerkauf*. Eds. Silke Urbanski, Christian Lamschus, and Jürgen Ellermeyer, 191–205. (Lüneburg: Dt. Salzmuseum, 1993); Grzybowski, xiv.
[59] Goetz, "Constructing the Past," 17.
[60] See Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, C. 900-1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010); Bagge, *Cross and Scepter: The Rise of the Scandinavian Kingdoms from the Vikings to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Sverre Bagge, "Christianizing Kingdoms," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John H. Arnold (Oxford University Press, 2014) 114-131.

of the *Gesta*, namely constructing a moralizing portrait of Archbishop Adalbert.[61] As such he never extrapolates to who the real Adalbert might have been, or what we can deduce as historians from the information Adam provides us about the spread of Christianity into the region given his authorial goals.

Two recent works concerning Adam of Bremen's *Gesta* and Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* perhaps best represent this pendulum swing toward radical skepticism of the sources. Eric Knibbs' book *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, claims that "the *Vita Anskarii* exaggerated both Ansgar's importance and perhaps also the extent of his accomplishments" going so far as to conclude that "Ansgar also distorted the record in other respects… [and] died within months. … The legateship, and the northern mission itself, died with Ansgar."[62] Knibbs fails, however, to explain how, if the northern mission ended with Ansgar, Christianity did reach Scandinavia, since the historians' consensus together with ample archeological evidence holds that Scandinavia had in fact become Christian within two centuries of Ansgar's death. His careful deconstruction of the *Vita Anskarii* usefully corrects the documentary record, providing an accurate account of which charters from popes and emperors granting privileges to Hamburg-Bremen mentioned by Adam and Rimbert existed and which were elaborate forgeries in the construction of a history for a fictional archbishopric. His radical skepticism toward the source, however, leads him to doubt that the northern mission ever happened, thereby discounting the usefulness of the source itself almost entirely.

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[61] Sverre Bagge, "Decline and Fall: Deterioration of Character as Described by Adam of Bremen and Sturla Þórðarson," in *Individuum Und Individualität Im Mittelalter*, ed. Johannes Adrianus Aertsen and Andreas Speer, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 24 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1996), 530–48.

[62] Eric Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations of Hamburg-Bremen*, Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011) 10-11.

Lukas Grzybowski, in the most recent book-length study on Adam of Bremen's *Gesta*, *The Christianization of Scandinavia in the Viking Era: Religious Change in Adam of Bremen's Historical Work*, takes a similarly skeptical view of the source's usefulness for doing history. Grzybowski mocks any 'outdated' attempts, including those of Winroth and Janson, to recover any factual information from the medieval chronicle, dismissively noting that "many studies are *still* primarily oriented towards a notion of history inspired by Ranke's early-nineteenth-century dictum: the search for the past as it *really* happened."[63] It seems obvious to Grzybowski that any such study, interested in explaining social processes that really occurred in history is not only impossible but naïve, and perhaps even representative of an old-fashioned sort of scholarship. He opts instead to launch what he terms a "history of concepts" or "*Vorstellungsgeschichte*" which he defines as "an anthropologically oriented study of historical ideas," shunning explicitly any "search for a factual or structural past."[64] Put differently in his own words, Grzybowski "abandons any pretension to reconstructing the past from a factual perspective ('what actually happened') or a structural perspective ('what processes are involved in a given event, its motives and conditions'), asking instead 'how did the individuals involved in a particular event or process perceive, signify and transmit their impressions, ideas and opinions about what they witnessed or believed they had witnessed?'"[65] This trend in the scholarship toward radical skepticism of the primary sources, exemplified by Grzybowski, Knibbs, and Goetz, has usefully illuminated biases and distortions in the written record of events by highlighting the viewpoints of the medieval authors, contextualizing and historicizing them. This thorough source criticism allows subsequent historians to return to these sources and more clearly see the historical reality

[63] Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, xiii. Emphasis added.
[64] Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, xiii-xvi.
[65] Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, xvi.

they describe. Since one may "engage with the chronicler's particular views as a way of discovering how he saw and interpreted his own world," the chronicler's viewpoint then emerges as a useful window onto his world as it actually was.[66]

Surprisingly, the category of scholars working on the conversion of Northern Europe who have remained least skeptical of the primary source record appears to be the archeologists. They continue to use the Latin clerical chronicles and hagiography as guides to significant sites, searching for the foundations of temples where Adam, Helmold, and the Prüfening monk record cult-sites or for physical evidence of churches in the sites where the primary sources say they were first planted, often with shocking success.[67] Archeological reports from Birka find evidence of a Christian community there in the form of material culture which fits neatly with information Rimbert presents in the *Vita Anskarii*.[68] Viking archeologist Søren Sindbæk, for example, has recently produced an archeological network analysis of every instance of travel and movement of people and goods between sites in the *Vita Anskarii*, finding physical evidence of contact at each location the source indicates interaction should have occurred.[69] Jörn Stæcker has produced several impressive studies summarizing material evidence for the 9th century Christian mission to Northern Europe testified to in both the *Vita Anskarii* and the *Gesta Hammaburgensis*. [70] In his

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[66] Grzybowski, *The Christianization of Scandinavia*, xiv.
[67] See Dagfinn Skre, "From Dorestad to Kaupang. Frankish Traders and Settlers in a 9th-Century Scandinavian Town," in *Dorestad in an International Framework* (Brepols Publishers, 2010), 137–41.
[68] See, for example, Björn Ambrosiani, "Birka and Dorestad," in *In Discussion with the Past: Archaeological Studies Presented to W. A. van Es*, ed. H. Sarfatij, W. J. H. Verwers, and P. J. Woltering (Amersfoort: Foundation for Promoting Archaeology, 1999), 239–42.
[69] Søren Michael Sindbæk, "The Small World of the Vikings: Networks in Early Medieval Communication and Exchange," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 40, no. 1 (June 1, 2007): 59–74.
[70] Jörn Staecker, "The 9th-Century Christian Mission to the North," in *Wulfstan's Voyage: The Baltic Sea Region in the Early Viking Age as Seen from Shipboard*, ed. A. Englert, A. Trakadas (Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum, 2009), 309–29; Jörn Staecker, "Legends and Mysteries: Reflections on the Evidence for the Early Mission in Scandinavia," in *Visions of the Past: Trends and Traditions in Swedish Medieval Archaeology*, ed. by Hans Anderson and others (Stockholm: Almkvist & Wiksell, 1997), 419-54; Jörn Staecker, "The Mission of the Triangle: The Christianisation of the Saxons, West Slavs and Danes in a Comparative Analysis," *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, 17 (2000), 99-116.

chapter produced in cooperation with the Viking Ship Museum he even identifies a building in Birka, Sweden which archologists have plausibly associated with the house church established by the first convert in that town, the prefect Herigar, according to the accounts of Adam of Bremen and Bishop Rimbert.[71] Anders Andrén has also taken for granted the veracity of the Christianization narrative in Adam of Bremen from a spatial point of view since archeology repeatedly confirms presence of churches in the locations described.[72] Ian Wood similarly finds that despite chroniclers' biases and some obvious factual errors, "their narrative is not irrelevant to the history of pagans and Christians in Denmark and Sweden during the ninth century."[73]

Thus, benefitting from generations of excellently researched source criticism which adjust for errors in the sources by understanding their authorial motives, and since the archeological community provides ample reason and precedent, the present study advocates and attempts reapproaching the array of Latin language narratives of the conversion of Northern Europe. The pendulum has swung from radical acceptance of the sources as historical accounts to radical skepticism, treating them solely as literary accounts with little to no historical value. But given that missionary journeys *did* happen in Northern Europe with measurable effects on the Christianization of the region, a historical process which also *did* happen, this paper asks a new set of questions, thereby striking a balance between the ends of this pendulum swing. What forms of institutional support made medieval missionary journeys possible? Can the presence or lack of said institutional support explain why different conversion efforts were more or less successful in various parts of Northern Europe? Do the primary sources present medieval

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[71] Staecker, "The 9th-Century Christian Mission to the North," 320; Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 22, 27; Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter xi.
[72] Anders Andrén, "The Significance of Places: The Christianization of Scandinavia from a Spatial Point of View," *World Archaeology* 45, no. 1 (February 15, 2013): 28, 34.
[73] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 42.

missionaries in Northern Europe as lone heroes and wandering preachers, or as well-resourced agents of the political-ecclesiastical engine of Latin Christendom which they represented? Did the strategy and role of the missionary develop over time in relation to measurable internal changes in Latin Christendom, namely, the ratcheting up of state power and the development of crusading ideology? And did these changes, in turn, alter how conversion was undertaken, perceived, understood, and narrated?

The present analysis finds compelling answers to these questions in the primary source record because the medieval authors themselves were quite concerned with the availability or paucity of institutional support for their frontier churches which facilitated their labors. They were also concerned with the political circumstances which shaped the Christianization process. As such, the primary source record, which has fallen under suspicion in recent historiographical trends, emerges as critically useful for the historian in understanding and explaining the conversion of Northern Europe and the experience of missionaries.

IV. Varieties of Institutional Support: "whatever was necessary for the performance of their *ministeria ecclesiastica*"[74]

Scholars have long debated the role missionaries played in the conversion of Northern Europe, but few, if any scholars, have seriously doubted that the missionary journeys happened. Scholars have not, however, systematically examined the varieties of support both from political and ecclesiastical institutions which facilitated missionary efforts, or the lack of support which hampered and inhibited them at various times in the missionary period. In identifying forms that

[74] Rimbert, "Life of Ansgar," chapter VII; Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 29*:* "*Quorum voluntati et desiderio [ipse] condelectatus, dedit eis ministeria ecclesiastica et scrinia atque tentoria ceteraque subsidia, quae tanto itineri videbantui necessaria*."

this support took, Ian Wood has rather vaguely suggested "resources and backing," from kings within Latin Christendom, while Birgit Sawyer has proffered permission "to preach in a district, … protection, shelter, and support" from local political leaders in the mission field.[75] Unfortunately, this list is neither specific, nor conclusive, but does pave the way for the attention of the present study and future research. The following analysis distinguishes between the following forms of support:

Forms of Institutional Support for the Conversion of Northern Europe

1) Material Support
    a) Companions
    b) Transportation
    c) Royal gifts
2) Political support
    a) From sending institutions (those within Latin Christendom which equipped, funded, and commissioned the conversion efforts)
        i) Backing of Christian kings and Dukes
    b) From receiving institutions (those within the mission field who hosted and protected the missionary)
        i) Permissions to preach
        ii) Allowances to build churches
        iii) Military escorts
3) Spiritual/legal support

[75] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 4; Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 59.

a) charters

b) legateships

c) dispensations and other ecclesiastical grants of special privilege

1. Material Support

a. Companions

The analysis begins with the *incipit* example. The sources recounting the first missionary journeys to Northern Europe describe Ansgar as "*athleta Dei*" (the athlete of God) for his bravery and faithfulness exhibited by journeying alone "'even unto the end of the earth,' because in the north the end of the world lay in Swedish territory"[76] Ian Wood points out Ansgar's *legatio gentium* (mission to the peoples) "was bound up with Carolingian backing" but also notes that the sources emphasize Ansgar's status as a lone missionary figure.[77] The *Vita Anskarii* informs readers that the abbot Wala of Corbie permitted Ansgar to go to Denmark and Sweden, but would permit no one else from the abbey or from "the abbot's household" to go, save Autbert.[78] Rimbert also relates that *dedit eis ministeria ecclesiastica* (he [Louis the Pious] gave them whatever they needed for their ministerial functions),[79] which Kruse suggested would include lay brothers and choir boys.[80] He appears alone in this suggestion, and Rimbert's parallel statement that the abbot could spare no one to accompany them, and that "they had none to render them any menial service" makes Kruse's interpretation seem unlikely.[81] Louis the Pious' provisions did include

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[76] Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 21, 55: "Hanc *ergo visionem servus Dei cum ante profectionem illam longe vidisset, certum tenebat animo, Dei se imperio ad partes illas incitari; et maxime in verbo, quod dictum est: 'Audite, insulae', quia omnis fere patria illa in insulis est constituta, et quod subiunctum est: 'Eris illis in salutem usque ad extremum terrae', quia finis mundi in aquilonis partibus in Sueonum coniacet regionibus*."

[77] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 14, 125; Wood, "Christians and Pagans in Ninth Century Scandinavia," 36: "Anskar readily accepted the task in which he was joined by Autbert, but by no one else".

[78] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter VII.

[79] Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 29, translation my own.

[80] Ernst Christian Kruse, *St. Anschar* (Altona: J.F. Hammerich, 1823) 256.

[81] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter VII.

other material necessities like "writing cases, tents and other things that would be helpful and which seemed likely to be needed on their great journey."[82] At the very least, Ansgar and Autbert, on their first journey into Denmark, as on their subsequent trips, had no fellow monks to accompany them, and certainly received no military escort or retinue.

Merely a century later, in 936, when Ansgar and Rimbert's successor to the arch-episcopal seat of Hamburg-Bremen and the 'legateship to the heathen,' Unni, journeyed to Birka, Sweden, he took with him a retinue. Adam of Bremen informs his audience that Unni was "seconded by his aid and by a legate" on his journeys, in contrast to solitary Ansgar before him, and that at the time of his death on September 17th in Birka "the bishop's disciples conducted his obsequies in tears and joy. They buried all his members but the head in that town of Björko [Birka]. His head they brought home to Bremen."[83] Thus the sources present Unni not as a lone hero wandering at the ends of the world, but as a step in the transformation of the missionary into a well-resourced and backed figure, travelling with companions.

Otto of Bamberg, two centuries later, represents another step in this process. When departing for his first missionary journey into Pomerania, once bishop Otto "had selected suitable ministers from each and every holy order as companions for his journey, he set out on his way."[84] And later the same source tells readers "escorted honourably by his men, he came to Bohemia."[85] The Prüfening monk never once appears at pains to depict Otto as a solitary figure, but rather, unflinchingly and consistently presents him travelling with a priestly retinue, and even with military escort (see below). So strong, in fact, is the *Ottovita* author's characterization of

[82] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter VII.
[83] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 51, 53.
[84] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 118.
[85] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 118.

Otto travelling in company that in one anecdote, when the bishop tried to give his men the slip to missionize without them, "they found and restrained [him]. They chided him that he had departed alone."[86] Likewise, the first preacher to the region of Livonia, Bishop Meinhard travelled with a "handful of missionaries with him," and the size of retinues only increased in the short amount of time which transpired between Meinhard and Albert.[87]

By attending to one aspect of material support for missionary journeys, namely companions which accompanied the agents of conversion on their journeys beyond the frontiers of Latin Christendom, this analysis has detected a significant shift in the portrayal of the missionary figure within the primary sources across the period. In Asgar's day, missionaries were praised for their bravery in facing (frequently violent) opposition alone and without a retinue to support them. When Nithard and Gaudbert were attacked in Sweden, for example, they had no one to call upon within Europe to retaliate or reinforce them. Just one century later, Adam of Bremen does not make an effort to present Archbishop Unni as a lone itinerant preacher, but rather, describes his retinue of disciples going with him into Sweden. Otto of Bamberg appears to have travelled with an even larger group of fellow clerics, and in addition, usually benefitted from armed escort (see below). The strength in numbers afforded to well-resourced missionaries enabled new strategies of mission. Early missionaries, in the Carolingian period, depended entirely on the good-will of kings and chieftains who received and backed them in the mission field. They avoided or departed hostile areas, while attempting to win over local elites with gifts and rhetoric where possible. However, Otto of Bamberg and more obviously in the following

[86] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 141.
[87] Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 5.

century, Albert, were able to missionize *contra* the will of the people and their local leaders because they enjoyed institutional support in the form of companions.

b. Transportation

Another crucial form of material support in conversion efforts was the provision of transportation. Missionary journeys often involved travel over long distances and difficult terrain, since the mission field was separated from Latin Christendom by geographic distance as well as the Baltic and North Seas, and in the case of Pomerania, dense forests and swamps. Missionaries either had to procure transport with funding provided to them by sending institutions, or benefit from means of transportation supplied by kings or bishops in the missionaries' homeland.

Missionaries frequently chartered passage on merchant vessels. For example, Ansgar travelled with merchants on one of their regular routes from Hedeby to Birka, to reach his destination. Rimbert's account mentions that "the merchants with whom they were travelling, defended themselves vigorously" from pirates while at sea before their ships were captured.[88] Adam likewise notes that Ansgar's successor Rimbert "personally pressed this mission vigorously" by travelling to "churches situated afar off among the heathen and which, a most serious consideration, had to be reached by way of dangerous seas."[89] Adam recounts Rimbert facing shipwreck and stormy seas on his various journeys to Sweden. Since it seems unlikely that the church of Hamburg-Bremen owned its own ships, Rimbert probably travelled in the company of merchants, a standard practice, since those sailors who regularly plied the waters of the Baltic and North seas were also the ones who knew the routes to locations like Birka. Piggybacking the

[88] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter X.
[89] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 36.

commercial networks of merchants appears as common practice for missionaries in the conversion of Scandinavia. Even at the end of the period, the Augustinian cannon and missionary bishop to the Slavs, Meinhard "came to Livonia *with a band of merchants* simply for the sake of Christ and only to preach. For German merchants, bound together through familiarity with the Livonians, were accustomed to go to Livonia, frequently sailing up the Dvina River."[90] Thus a pattern emerges, in which religious networks, at least in this early period, overlapped commercial networks, as travelling preachers accessed and leveraged the capital merchants owned in the form of boats, the knowledge they commanded of routes for safe passage, and the familiarity or social trust they had garnered for foreigners from Latin Christendom among the pagans. However, missionaries probably had to purchase or barter passage on said merchant vessels with funding provided to them by sending institutions, except in some cases where merchants themselves vigorously supported the conversion of their pagan trading partners,[91] in which case they themselves were active participants in the Christianization effort and their altruistic provision of transportation also counts as support and backing from sending institutions.

In other cases, ships were supplied to the missionaries by benefactors. The *Vita Anskarii* recounts that Ansgar and Autbert "arrived at Cologne. At that time there was a venerable bishop there named Hadebald.[92] He had compassion upon their needs and presented them with a good boat in which they might place their possessions and in which there were two cabins which had

[90] Henry of Livonia, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* trans. James A. Brundage (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961) 26 (emphasis mine).
[91] See Mark R. Munzinger, "The Profits of the Cross: Merchant Involvement in the Baltic Crusade (c. 1180-1230)," *Journal of Medieval History* 32, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 163–85; and for the first articulation of merchant involvement see Paul Johansen, "Die Bedeutung der Hanse für Livland." *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 65 (1940): 1-55.
[92] The Robinson translation renders "bishop". See *Life of Ansgar*, Chapter VII. In the original Latin: *"venerandus antistes Hadebaldus."* '*Anitistes*' could be rendered as bishop, prelate, abbot, master, priest, or even a cleric of lower rank, but in combination with '*venerandus*' and the authority to grant a ship, the author follows Robinson.

been suitably prepared for them."[93] Ian Wood casts doubt on the veracity of all the details, saying "granted the very different description by Ermoldus of the same journey one may choose to regard Rimbert's somewhat comic anecdote [Hadebald's forcing King Harald and Ansgar to share a cabin] as an invention. The latter does, however, go on to offer a serious insight into the importance of a missionary's contacts," since it was only through Ansgar's episcopal tie to Hadebald, bishop of Cologne, that they were able to secure such material support in the form of a ship.[94] Bishop Otto of Bamberg also travelled by ship in his missionary journeys to the Slavs. His biographer reports that he "left the inhabitants of Wolin behind and, *ascending the Oder by ship*, arrived at the city of Szczecin," and "then, … the blessed priest *came by ship* on the Oder to a certain small city called 'Gridiz'. Thereafter he *sailed again* to another site on the coast, which is called Lubin;" and lastly "he travelled downstream on the Elbe River from *Magdeburg by ship* and landed with his men at the castle called Havelberg."[95] While the Prüfening monk provides no insight into how Otto came in possession of said ship while in the mission field, one must assume it was either provided for him by a Duke at home or abroad supporting the conversion effort, by a sympathetic bishop like Hadebald, or that Otto received support in the form of money to broker passage on a merchant vessel, like Meinhard, Ansgar, and Rimbert often did.

Scholars have tended not to take notice of the inherent connection between mission and mobility. Perhaps one reason why modern audiences might take for granted the practical realities of travel and transportation involved in missionary journeys is that we live in such a global and interconnected world today. But for medieval missionaries and for the authors of our primary

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[93] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter VII. In the original Latin: "*Cum gravi itaque difficultate hanc suscipientes peregrinationem, pervenerunt Coloniam. Ubi tunc temporis venerandus antistes Hadebaldus, compatiens eorum necessitati, dedit eis navem optimam, ubi sua reponerent; in qua erant duae mansiunculae satis opportune praeparatae*." Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 29.

[94] Wood, "Christians and Pagans," 59.

[95] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 123, 129, 138. Emphasis my own.

sources, the possibility of travel was anything but a given. Rimbert relates how "having started then *with considerable difficulty*" Ansgar and his companion finally reached Cologne[96] and Adam records how Unni "following in the footsteps of the great preacher Ansgar, he then crossed the Baltic Sea and *not without difficulty* came to Björkö [Birka]."[97] Thus, medieval narrators of the Christianization period were keenly aware of the difficulties posed by pre-modern travel. Reaching the mission field in the first place never would have been possible without the support and backing of powerful institutions within Latin Christendom who sympathized with the conversion effort.

c. Royal Gifts

Often, the institutions backing missionary endeavors would lavishly equip the missionary with gifts to take with him into the mission field and dispense to potential converts, or to use to placate and win the favor of local leaders. Since early missionary strategy, in particular, depended crucially on the favor of local leaders. Before about 1140 bishops could not depend upon the mobilization of large armies or crusading orders to aid their conversion efforts, and thus "in the ninth century missionaries appear to act within established norms. Much depended upon the ruler and for the most part Rimbert presents us with a group of well-disposed monarchs."[98] Itinerant preachers, far from home and their sending institutions, "first had to make contact with those in power before attempting to preach in a district," as Sawyer helpfully reminds readers.[99] In the Scandinavian context, given the prevalence of Christian burial practices and runestones, even in Uppland, Sweden, "there must have been many local leaders who were willing to

[96] Rimbert, "Life of Ansgar," chapter VII. Emphasis added.
[97] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 51. Emphasis added.
[98] Wood, "Christians and Pagans," 58.
[99] Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 59.

encourage the spread of Christianity."[100] The sources frequently present such favorably disposed monarchs, such as Harold, son of Gorm the Old of Denmark, who "although he had not yet received the sacrament of baptism, he permitted the public profession of Christianity" by bishop Unni to his people.[101] Similarly, when Unni arrived in Birka, which was then ruled by Ring, Eric, and Emund, he "approached those kings even though they did not believe and with their permission preached the Word of God throughout Sweden."[102]

One wonders why a local leader, unconvinced of the veracity of a foreign religion, and himself unwilling to convert, would tolerate its preaching in his realm, particularly when Old Norse paganism acted as a central pilar in the maintenance of the local power of Viking chieftains and kings.[103] Potential reasons abound why foreign religious ideas and rituals which came with Christianity might have been attractive to import and dispense from the gift-throne by a chieftain to his men, explored at length in the excellent studies of Dobat and Winroth.[104] Gro Steinsland joins them in suggesting that Old Norse paganism "may have had the unintended consequence of facilitating the transition from paganism to Christianity… [due to] a continuity between the ruler-centered paganism of the tenth century and the leading role played by kings in the Christianization process. … The ruler is presented as the medium through which crucial elements in native traditions were able to connect with the very different world of

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[100] Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 59.
[101] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 51.
[102] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 52.
[103] What little scholars do know for certain about Old Norse religion includes the role of the local ruler and its inherently political element. Sacrifices, feasts, and gift exchange helped cement and reinforce the local ruler's place in the social, political, and religious hierarchies. Sacred sites in Old Norse religion tended to overlap significantly with political sites. See Jens Peter Schjødt, "Ideology of the Ruler in Pre-Christian Scandinavia: Mythic and Ritual Relations," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 6 (2010) 161–94; Anders Andrén, "Behind 'Heathendom': Archaeological Studies of Old Norse Religion," *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 27, no. 2 (2005) 105–38.
[104] Andres Siegfried Dobat, "Viking Stranger-Kings: The Foreign as a Source of Power in Viking Age Scandinavia, or, Why There Was a Peacock in the Gokstad Ship Burial?," *Early Medieval Europe* 23, no. 2 (2015) 161–201; Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*.

Christianity."[105] The essential role of local rulers in the Christianization of Scandinavia is a consensus within the field today. Peter Sawyer has pointed out that "the conversion of rulers made possible the establishment of regular church organization"[106] while more recently Stefan Brink reaffirmed that "the new picture sees the Christian religion as being first introduced to the upper strata of society, before trickling down to the lower social classes. Christianization is thus, in its primary phase, now regarded as having been a matter for kings and chieftains."[107]

The surprisingly peaceful process of conversion in Scandinavia in contrast with the conquest of other northern regions like Saxony or Livonia may be in large part explained by this continuity between crucial aspects of Christianity and Nordic paganism which it replaced. Kings seem to have recognized this continuity and therefore participated actively in the importation of Christianity to their realms. As Ian Wood notes "the leading people of the Scandinavian kingdoms, with the exception of Hovi, are portrayed as being favourable [*sic*]to the missionaries."[108] The sources rarely provide insight into the motives of an individual convert, and speculation on why Scandinavian kings might have voluntarily imported Christianity into their realms lies largely beyond the scope of this paper. The fact remains that kings were essential ingredients in the success of the conversion process, and that *early missionary strategy responded to this reality*, targeting the uppermost classes in Scandinavian society first, and then getting permission to preach and construct churches in a realm. But to do so, they first had to win

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[105] Antonsson, "The Conversion and Christianization of Scandinavia: A Critical Review," 61; Gro Steinsland, *Den hellige konge: om religion og herskermakt fra vikingtid til middelal-der* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2000).
[106] Peter Sawyer, "The Organization of the Church in Scandinavia after the Missionary Phase," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12/13 (1988): 480–87.
[107] Stefan Brink, "New Perspectives on the Christianization of Scandinavia and the Organization of the Early Church," in *Scandinavia and Europe 800-1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Katherine Holman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 163–75. See also Peter H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, A.D. 700-1100* (London; New York: Methuen, 1982).
[108] Wood, "Christians and Pagans," 58.

over the local rulers who received them, and they often did so with gifts, usually furnished by sending institutions.

On Ansgar's way to Birka in the company of merchants "they fell into the hands of pirates … who took from them their ships and all that they possessed….They lost here the royal gifts (*munera regia*) which they should have delivered there, together with all their other possessions, save only what they were able to take and carry with them as they left the ship."[109] Elsewhere in Rimbert's narrative, Ansgar sought to win over king Horik of the Danes with many gifts: "For this reason he paid frequent visits to Horic, who was at that time sole monarch of the Danes, and endeavoured *to conciliate him by gifts and by any possible kinds of service* in the hope that he might gain permission to preach in his kingdom."[110] In both cases, the local ruler receiving the gifts responded favorably to Ansgar's and eventually, his requests for support of his mission were granted, and in the case of Horic, may have even led to a conversion: "His fidelity and goodness having been thus recognised, King Horic began to regard him with great affection and to make use of his advice and to treat him in every respect as a friend … When Anskar had thus gained his friendship he began to urge him to become a Christian."[111]

Gifts were not solely employed to win over local political leaders, although gradual changes in the historical context may explain the development of strategy from targeting high profile rulers in Scandinavia with gift-giving to targeting the masses in the case of the Slavs. For example, in the 1100s Bishop Otto came with gifts to the inhabitants of Wolin: "Seeing this, the bishop thought to approach them in another way, so that he might conquer with gifts those whom

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[109] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter X; Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, 32: "*Ibi itaque et munera regia, quae illuc deferre debuerant, et omnia quae habuerant perdiderunt, excepto parum quid, quod forte prosilientes e navi secum auferre et asportare poterant.*"

[110] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter XXIV.

[111] Rimbert, *Life of Ansgar*, chapter XXIV.

he had not been able to conquer with reason."[112] One reason that Otto's strategy included distribution of gifts to the people rather than to local rulers may be that Duke Warcisław of Pomerania "had already abandoned the worship of idols and had received the basics of the true faith some time ago," and thus supported Otto actively, participating in the Christianization of his people (see below).[113] One anecdote from the Life of Bishop Otto stands out. During his time preaching in Szczecin he befriended the two sons of "Domasław, one of the foremost men of the city," spent significant time preaching to the boys, "and he joyfully *offered them some small presents* now and then, of the sort that this age was doubtlessly accustomed to seek."[114] Eventually, won over by the preaching and the presents, the two boys convert, and the Prüfening monk immediately follows the line about the presents saying "because of this," presumably referring to gift-giving, "the boys' spirit was gradually guided toward the faith. At last, they broke out in this voice, with the Holy Spirit supporting them: 'Father, these things are new, which you provide; they were never announced to our ears.'"[115] The conversion narrative attributes Otto's success to the gifts and even portrays the gospel itself in gift-language, associating the 'good news' of salvation with the physical presents as those 'new things' which the bishop provided.

Helmold's *Chronicle of the Slavs* provides no exception. Helmold records the ways that the Bishop Marco of the "new plantation" church at Oldenburg brought about the "baptism of the Wagrian and Abodrite peoples" by gifts he had received from the emperor for distribution to converts.[116] "The bishops of Oldenburg, besides, held the rulers of the Slavs in great respect

[112] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 122.
[113] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 119.
[114] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 124-125.
[115] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 125.
[116] Helmold von Bosau, *The Chronicle of the Slavs*, trans. Francis J. Tschan (Columbia University Press, 1935) 72.

because, through the munificence of the great prince Otto, they had been provided with an abundance of worldly goods from which they could dispense generously and win for themselves the good will of the people."[117] Gift giving occurs much less frequently and seems to have been nearly abandoned as a conversion strategy by the time of Henry of Livonia's chronicle with the advent of crusade as a new method of Christianization.

Ample literature exists on the phenomenon of gift-giving and reciprocity in the Middle Ages. The present analysis, however, concerns itself with the primary source record, the authors of which often stress the importance of gifts in winning over converts, and gaining the support of powerful people in the mission field. Our medieval authors tell us that gift-giving was often employed as a strategy of mission, and that royal gifts were essential in the effectiveness of missionary journeys. Since the sources indicate gift-giving had such a relevant causal role in conversion processes, the historian must inquire where these gifts came from, who had access to them, and who did not? The missionaries included in this analysis all had monastic backgrounds, which usually meant they had taken a vow of poverty, and thus the royal gifts, an essential ingredient in the success of Christianization, were not coming from their own possessions. Rather, as our sources tell us, it was "through the munificence of the great" kings and princes that missionaries were provisioned with riches to distribute, sweetening the deal, so to speak, for potential converts.[118]

The medieval sources never give the historian explicit insight into the fiscal cost of a missionary journey through requisition logs or invoices. However, close reading of the primary sources reveals the importance of royal gifts, which must have been supplied to the missionaries

[117] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 73.
[118] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 73.

by powerful and wealthy people within Latin Christendom who found the cause of Christianization worthy of their financial support. Thus, royal gifts reveal an imprint of support networks, without which conversion efforts would have been impossible. However, in the build-up to the Baltic Crusades, the sources weight gift-giving less and less heavily as a relevant causal factor in Christianization. As such, they provide a useful window into the chronology of shifts in missionary strategy. Preachers used to depend upon the permission and favor of local leaders, frequently seen in the conversion of Scandinavia, but once the doctrine of Crusade emerged such that conversion of non-Christians and war against an enemy had become linked, gift-giving became less relevant.

2. Political Support

Although the categories of institutional support often overlap, since political support could take material and legal forms, the present study confines itself to the language of the primary sources, which often speak of kings or emperors championing the cause of Christianization. Very often, however, a king professed support for the conversion efforts but his backing was only nominal, or he lacked the resources to actually contribute. Political support must be divided into the categories of sending institutions (political leaders at home) and receiving institutions (political leaders abroad, in the mission field). Particular attention is paid to instances where the chronicler credits success of conversion to the support and generosity of a political figure, or credits their lack of support with the obstruction of Christianization.

a. Sending Institutions

Ansgar enjoyed significant political support in at least his first two missionary journeys to Scandinavia. Rimbert records “his serene majesty the emperor Ludovic [Louis the Pious]”

supporting Ansgar and commissioning his first trip to Denmark in 826 when "he bade them go with Harald" to retake the Danish king's lost lands.[119] And later, in 829, Ansgar was commissioned "by royal command" of the same Ludovic to go to Sweden for the first time, at the request of Swedish ambassadors who had come to his court.[120] This level of imperial involvement in Carolingian missionary journeys ought not surprise readers. As Ian Wood notes, "Christianization was in one sense an aspect of Frankish diplomacy to which legates and also foreign armies were subjected."[121] Nowhere is this reality better represented than in Louis the Pious' decision to sponsor Ansgar and Autbert's northern journey. Harald Klak's defeat by other Danish kings, flight from his former kingdom, and arrival as a supplicant at the court of emperor Louis all preceded Ansgar's trip. Louis the Pious became willing to support missionaries in the conversion effort when it meant re-installing Harald Klak as a puppet king in Denmark, pacifying his own enemy, the Danes and gaining an ally in the process. Thus, in the Carolingian period, imperial support of missions overlapped with diplomacy.

Adam of Bremen, however, records a significant increase in royal involvement in the Northern mission under Archbishop Adaldag in the reign of King Otto I. "He [Adaldag] did not cease to urge the will of the most victorious and just king in everything that is of God, because he perceived that the king at that time was especially well disposed toward the conversion of the pagans."[122] Adaldag, of all the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen which preceded Adam's own day, accomplished the most for the furtherance of the *legatio gentium*. He "was the first to consecrate bishops for Denmark: Hored for Schleswig, Liafdag for Ribe, Reginbrund for Arhus.

[119] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter VII.
[120] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter IX.
[121] Wood, "Christians and Pagans," 50.
[122] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 55.

To them he also commended the churches across the sea in Fyn, Zealand, and Scania and in Sweden," securing for his archbishopric its first suffragan sees.[123] Most of his accomplishments were possible only because of his strong ties to king Otto I which positioned Adaldag to receive new forms of support for the Northern mission. He had been active in the chancery of King Otto I for some time before being appointed archbishop, and he enjoyed the favor of Queen Matilda, which led to his being "commended at court."[124] Adaldag spent years in Italy with Otto "because he could not be torn from the king's side" so intimate was their tie even during his episcopacy.[125]

Adaldag took up the commission to Christianize the neighboring peoples that Hamburg Bremen was put in charge of and "… the Lord granted him the success he wished, both propitious time and the favor of the king. With the latter he enjoyed such intimacy that he could scarcely ever tear himself from his side; for all that he never lost sight of the needs of his diocese or neglected the care of his legateship."[126] King Otto's support of the *legatio gentium* took many forms. "As soon as Adaldag entered upon the episcopate, he caused Bremen, which for a long time previously had been controlled by royal officers and judges, to be set free *by an edict of the king* and given equality with other cities in respect of its immunities as well as its freedom."[127] This institutional development outside of Scandinavia doubtless positioned Hamburg-Bremen to acquire its suffragan sees and speed the spread of Christianity in the North. And Otto's support did not only extend North but also East. Adam of Bremen claims that king Otto subjected "all the Slavic peoples" and "they willingly proffered the victor both tribute and their conversion to Christianity. The whole of the pagan folk was baptized. Then were churches first built in

[123] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 57.
[124] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 54.
[125] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 60.
[126] Adam of Bremen, *History of the* Archbishops, 55.
[127] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 55. Emphasis added.

Slavia."[128] Otto the Great then constructed the city of Magdeburg and "designating it as the metropolitan see for the Slavs, had Adalbert… consecrated as its archbishop."[129] From there, Magdeburg gained five suffragan sees, each of which served as centers of the subsequent Christianization efforts to the Baltic Slavs.[130] Helmold of Bosau relates in his chronicle that "the great Adalbert, archbishop of Hamburg … was an ambitions and very influential man in the realm, since he had the most powerful Caesar Henry, the son of Conrad, as well as Pope Leo, well disposed and agreeable to his wishes in all matters. He exercised the authority of an archbishop and functioned as papal legate in all the northern kingdoms, to wit, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway."[131]

Otto of Bamberg also enjoyed the favor of kings. Before his missionary journeys he had the support of King Henry IV, the king's sister Judith, and "through the munificence of kings and princes, he advanced toward the privilege of a better condition."[132] This advancement which his hagiographer describes positioned him to become the missionary commissioned to the Pomeranians under Henry V. Otto of Bamberg also received the financial and military backing of Christian Duke Bolesław of Poland who sent him on to Pomerania who was friendly toward the cause of the conversion of the Slavs.[133]

Helmold's chronicle, however, provides the most interesting commentary on the political support of sending institutions in the conversion efforts. He credits Otto with a crucial role in the

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[128] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 57.
[129] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 62.
[130] For more on the political, economic, legal, and religious significance of Magdeburg on the Christianization of the region, see Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993). He describes at length Magdeburg's role in the *Ostsiedlung* and other processes of migration, colonization, and cultural diffusion from Latin Christendom into the Baltic region.
[131] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 95.
[132] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 108.
[133] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 119.

narrative of the conversion of the Baltic Slavs by ascribing to him the constitution of Magdeburg, the creation of a metropolitan see, the appointment and consecration of a Slavic archbishop, and the founding of a Benedictine Monastery, as well as the creation of Oldenburg.[134] But the central role of the figure of Otto the Great in the success of Christianization becomes more obvious when Helmold recounts the lulls in the process. Helmold describes the Saxon Duke Billug's betrayal and notes that "the state of the church became precarious. Nor was there at hand any means by which the condition of the young church could be fully restored because Otto the Great had long ago departed this life and both the second and the third Ottos were occupied with their Italian wars."[135] The memory of Otto I, who was not only sympathetic too, but an energetic agent in, the cause of Christ, serves as a narrative tool for Helmold in writing Christianization. He often compares kings to Otto in their relative effectiveness or lack thereof in spreading Christianity on the borders of Saxony.

Helmold again denotes a lack of institutional support under the Henrys. After detailing a period of long civil war and schism he describes these emperors this way: "always encumbered with domestic concerns, as is evident, the imperial Henrys certainly retarded their conversion [that of the Slavs] not a little."[136] Conversely, Helmold recounts the success of Christianization under the missionary priest Vicelin who enjoyed the support of "the illustrious Caesar Lothar [III] and his very worthy consort Richenza [who] were most devoutly solicitous for the divine service," support which proved essential in the planting of several frontier churches.[137] In describing Lothar's role in the construction of the churches at Segeberg and Lübeck, and the

[134] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 70, 71, 73.
[135] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 78.
[136] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 137.
[137] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 160.

provisioning of priests there, the chronicler relates that "the seed plot of the new plantation in Slavia was thus sown through the mercy of God *and the virtue of the Caesar Lothar*."[138] But when Lothar III died, and was succeeded by monarchs less involved in the Conversion efforts, Helmold writes that "the good emperor, whose zeal for the conversion of the heathens had been proved … was overtaken by an untimely death … so, too, the fathers of the new church met with very great losses," again illustrating the effects of a lack of institutional support.[139]

Throughout his narrative Helmold lays his finger precisely on the practical relevance of institutional support in Christianization, which he terms "the means by which the condition of the young church" might be restored, by noting clearly when such support was absent, and the conversion efforts suffered accordingly, either under Otto II and III or under the Henrys.[140] Otto I and Lothar III were the two Holy Roman Emperors most involved in the affairs of Saxony and the frontier church where Helmold wrote from, in part because Lothar III was Duke of Saxony before becoming emperor.[141] Naturally, these two emperors emerge as the most significant political actors in the Helmold's account of the conversion, but also, they constitute the most significant players in the events of the past as historians can reconstruct them. Their support does seem to have had measurable effects on the speed and success of Christianization on the frontier.

b. Receiving Institutions

The success of conversion efforts depended critically not only on the support of powerful people within Latin Christendom, but also on those who received missionaries beyond the bounds of Europe's frontier. We have already encountered the missionary strategy of presenting

[138] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 162. Emphasis added.
[139] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 162.
[140] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 78.
[141] Many thanks to Jonathan Lyon for this helpful observation from which I benefitted in our conversations.

royal gifts in order to gain the favor of local monarchs to secure permissions to preach, support for constructing churches, and guarantees of protection. Unni benefitted from the support of local kings in both Norway and Sweden, who allowed him to preach despite being unwilling to convert themselves, at least at first (see above). But political support of the missionary from receiving institutions varied across the period and became increasingly less relevant toward the Baltic Crusades.

i. Permissions to Preach

In addition to the permissions which Unni received from Harald Bluetooth, and the local kings of Birka, earlier Ansgar had received support from Horic II of Demark: "the king showed his pleasure in receiving him [Ansgar] by permitting him immediately to do everything connected with the Christian religion which his predecessor had formerly allowed to be done."[142] Similarly, when Ansgar arrived in Birka for the first time with his companion Witmar, "they were kindly received by King Björn and were permitted publicly to preach the Word of God."[143] Likewise, Bishop Otto of Bamberg was received warmly by Duke Warcisław of Pomerania, who "rejoiced exceedingly at the bishop's arrival" and granted permission to preach to his people.[144] Helmold also records Vicelin and other missionary priests receiving permission to preach in Slavic towns. For example, even after the young church lost its institutional support in the power vacuum created by Lothar's death, "the priest Ludolph, however, and those who lived with him at Lübeck were not dispersed in this devastation because they lived in the stronghold and under the protection of Pribislav," and with his permission and sheltering, continued to preach.[145] One

[142] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter XXXII.
[143] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 22.
[144] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 119-120.
[145] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 161, 164.

must remember, however, that in the cases of Otto and Ludolph, the dukes who received them were already Christian converts themselves, a reality quite different in the days of Ansgar and Unni, and a reality which shaped missionary strategies.

ii. Sponsoring Churches

Another practical constraint on the success of conversion efforts was the supply of material resources to build churches from which evangelization might unfold beyond the temporary presence of a missionary priest. Construction of churches far from Latin Christendom in predominantly pagan areas was a daunting task which all but required the sponsorship of local powerful people. In one such case, King Horic granted Ansgar permission to build a Church: "The king most kindly granted this permission and allowed him to build a church in a part belonging to his kingdom, called Sliaswic, (likely Hedeby) … he gave also a place in which a priest might live, and likewise granted permission to anyone in his kingdom who desired to become a Christian."[146] In much the same way, Horic II, previously hostile to Christianity, when approached by Ansgar, "erected in another port of his realm, at Ribe, the second church in Denmark."[147] Otto of Bamberg likewise received support, not only in the form of permission to build a church, but also endowments to do so from the Duke of Pomerania: "so he built a church in each city for them and obtained an endowment for each church from Duke Warcisław."[148]

Similarly, In Helmold's chronicle, Vicelin's church planting depended on the permission of the Slavic prince: "When the priest Vicelin saw that the prince of the Slavs was favorably disposed toward the followers of Christ, he went to him and set before him anew the undertaking

[146] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter XXIV.
[147] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 32.
[148] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 139.

which he had proposed to his father. On gaining the favor of the prince, Vicelin sent the venerable priests, Ludolph and Volkward, into the stronghold Lübeck to look after the salvation of the people."[149] The pattern continues even into Mienhard's day, the missionary to Livonia, "after receiving, therefore, the permission of king Vladimir of Polozok … this priest boldly set out upon the divine work, preaching to the Livonians and building a church in the village of Uexkül."[150] Missionaries, at least when building the first churches in a region, seem to have depended upon the support of sympathetic local leaders who could fund the construction of churches, which then served as footholds of Christianity into the region from which priests could be permanently stationed and minister to the people.

iii. Military Escort and Use of Force

Ansgar, Rimbert, and Unni received no military aid in the early days of the conversion of Northern Europe. Even when Nithard was martyred in Sweden, the response from Christians was to send more missionaries, again, unaccompanied by soldiers, despite the apparent danger. It is doubtful if military escort would have been possible in the time of Louis the Pious, Lothar, or their successors, even when kings vocally supported Christianization, because power was decentralized and insecure at home. When Louis sent Ansgar into Denmark, the only armed men in the company were Harald Klak's, not a Carolingian army. Many scholars of the conversion of Scandinavia have noticed its striking peacefulness relative to other conversion projects on the frontiers of Europe. For example, Michael Gelting has argued that "the contrast is stark between the huge, peaceful success of Christianization around the Millennium and the much more limited and costly gains before and after," characterized by their "military campaigns of appalling

[149] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 151.
[150] Henry of Livonia, *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, 26.

brutality."[151] But while Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii* and Adam's *Gesta* describe very little military force emanating northward in the cause of Christianization, the *Ottovita* presents an altered strategy of mission enabled by newly available forms of institutional support. Otto and Helmold both lived "in a transition period in which missionizing was still driven by individual missionaries like himself, but large-scale military support in the Christianization process was becoming its main tenet."[152]

Adam of Bremen does credit King Henry I's invasion of "the Bohemians and the Sorbs, … and other Slavic peoples" (at Lenzen in 929) and subsequent invasion of the Danes (c. 935) which "so thoroughly terrified King Gorm that the latter pledged himself to obey his commands, and as a suppliant, sued for peace" as the occasion on which "Unni saw that the door of the faith had been opened to the gentiles … through the valor of King Henry."[153] However, no evidence exists that this conquest was chiefly a conversion effort, undertaken at the behest of missionaries, nor that Unni could have requested or expected such military response or aid in his mission. Rather, he appears to have reacted to shifting political circumstances, themselves not directly connected with his Church's missionizing. And despite King Henry's military action, Unni's strategy remained that of the individual preacher, travelling unescorted into Denmark and relying on rhetoric to win over Gorm and Harold. However, Otto of Bamberg regularly travelled in the company of armed military escort: "Paul, after he had received the bishop, escorted him in great haste with almost sixty *milites* to that duke. The duke, when he heard news of his arrival, joyfully came to meet the approaching bishop with no fewer than 300 armed men near the river

[151] Michael H. Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal: Courtier Bishops and the Success of Christianization at the Turn of the First Millennium," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 6 (2010): 101–102.
[152] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[153] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 50.

Warta."[154] And later, "immediately, he bound two *milites*, who had also come to believe earlier, to the bishop's service; he made it their duty to escort the holy priest of the Lord through unknown places and protect him from the unbelievers' attack."[155]

In sharp contrast to King Henry's military action, which was unrelated to Unni's mission, when Bishop Otto complains to the Duke of Poland about injury and opposition which he met with on the mission field, the sources leave us with perhaps the most strikingly colorful pre-crusade example of the use of force in the conversion of the North. The Prüfening monk records that in response to bishop Otto's appeal, if the citizens of Pomerania continued to harass Otto, "he [the duke] would arrive with an army as quickly as possible and exact the greatest revenge upon them in the custom of victors. But if they consented to listen to the bishop and to receive the word of God, they would suffer no harm from him or any of his men."[156]

Clearly, something had changed about the quantity of military forces available to respond to the beck and call of missionaries, about the willingness of political institutions to aid conversion efforts by military means, and the strategies employed in conversion which now included force and threat of violence. Helmold's account connects this change to Bernard of Clairvaux's arrival to preach crusade in Germany around 1146. He describes this turn as "events which were strange and which amazed the whole world" because "the holy man began, by what divine order instructed I do not know, to exhort the princes and the other faithful folk to … conquer the barbarous nations of the East and to reduce them to Christian rule."[157] At this point in his narrative the application of military force to conversion becomes commonplace. And

[154] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 120.
[155] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 120.
[156] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 126.
[157] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 170-171.

Helmold's narrative switch tracks with the scholarly consensus that mobilization of armies and military support became the prevalent modes of conversion, "especially after the 1147 crusade against the Wends," a crusade also preached by Bernard.[158]

Bernard's preaching had offered spiritual rewards, including indulgences, to individuals who answered the call to crusade against the Wends. This promise was substantiated in the papal bull of Pope Eugenius III called the *Divina dispensatione* which made the spiritual rewards of the Wendish Crusade equivalent with those of the Levantine crusades.[159] However, this concession to crusaders appears to have been 'too little too late,' to have any real effect on the motives of participants. The impetus for the crusade expressed in the 1107 Magdeburg Letter offered no spiritual indulgences but instead emphasized land acquisition, a principle which came to define the character of and motivations behind the Wendish Crusade.[160] Bernard feared that the true motivations of crusaders were purely material, and so preached against gluttony for land and money, saying "we prohibit completely that a truce be made for any reason with these people [Wends] either for money or tribute, until such time as, with the aid of God either their religion or their nation shall be destroyed."[161] However, this little effect on the methods and motives of the Baltic crusading orders (see below). Despite the conceptual differences between the Levantine and Baltic Crusades, conquest became the new default method of Christianization. Suddenly, lay armies and militaristic holy orders became available as a form of institutional support for Christianization which had not existed before the development of crusade ideology.

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[158] Jezierski, "Risk Societies on the Frontier," 158.
[159] Mihai Dragnea, "Divine Vengeance and Human Justice in The Wendish Crusade of 1147," *Collegium Medievale* 29 (2016).
[160] Dragnea, "Divine Vengeance"; see also Christensen, *Northern Crusades*.
[161] Dragnea, "Divine Vengeance," 62; and Marek Tamm, "How to Justify a Crusade? The Conquest of Livonia and New Crusade Rhetoric in the Early Thirteenth Century," *Journal of Medieval History* 39, no. 4 (2013): 431–55.

Arnold of Lübeck and Henry of Livonia, both writing crusading chronicles, record events at a time after the militarization of the conversion effort had already occurred and the use of force had become a given. They witnessed "the subjugation of heathen tribes in the west Baltic" by crusading orders whose mission was primarily "to conquer heathen territory" which was subsequently given to the crusaders to rule over as petty lords.[162] As we have seen, Albert of Buxhövden capitulates the process of militarization by raising crusading armies to gain his episcopal see by force, inaugurating whole orders of holy warriors. Contrasted with Carolingian missionaries like St. Ansgar, or medial figures like Otto of Bamberg, Albert serves as a figurehead for the metamorphosis of missionary strategy full-grown into its most violent form.

3. Spiritual-Legal Support

Another form of support from institutions within Latin Christendom enabled missionary journeys into Northern Europe during the conversion process besides the provisioning of material resources and the backing of political powers. Conversion efforts also required the support of the Church, which meant earning the sympathy of the current Pope, as well as local bishops and abbots. Spiritual support sometimes meant that the missionary was invested with spiritual authority, granted permission to evangelize, or was given other grants of special privilege which facilitated conversion efforts.

For example, in order for St. Ansgar to embark on his 'mission to the heathen,' he required the permission and commission of his abbot, Wala of Corbie, because leaving the monastery

[162] Marie-Luise Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia: The Attitudes of the Religious Military Orders Toward Christianization," in *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals*, ed. Armstrong and Wood, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 147. See also Janus Jensen, "Denmark and the Holy War: A Redefinition of a Traditional Pattern of Conflict 1147-1169," in *Scandinavia and Europe 800-1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence*, ed. Adams and Holman, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 219–36; and Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*.

meant violating the Benedictine Rule of *stabilitas loci*. In authoring the *Vita Anskarii*, Rimbert is at pains to explain "*Qua occasione a loco stabilitatis suae huc secesserit*" (how he [that is, Ansgar,] came to depart his stable place [at the monastery which he had vowed not to depart from without a special dispensation] at this point in time).[163] This dispensation represents a spiritual grant of special privilege which was prerequisite to Ansgar becoming "Apostle of the North," particularly since Wala was unwilling to grant such dispensation to anyone else at Corbie, positioning Ansgar uniquely to accomplish his missionary feats. Later, Mienhard would receive the same dispensation. As Murray notes, "Cistercian monks were normally subject to the restrictions of *stabilitas loci*, and were not allowed to leave their monasteries without permission of their superiors. However, Pope Celestine III granted Meinhard the right to enlist companions to assist him with the execution of his office without seeking permission from the heads of their houses."[164]

Similarly, Ansgar received his legateship from Pope Gregory IV who "appointed him as his legate for the time being amongst all the neighbouring races of the Swedes and Danes, also the Slavs and the other races that inhabited the regions of the north, so that he might" with all authority and backing of Latin Christendom undertake missionary journeys.[165] Eric Knibbs casts

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[163] Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, chapter VI, 29. Translation my own. '*Huc*' appears to play a rhetorical role in Rimbert's construction, and thus was not included in Robinson's translation. But it might be rendered temporally as in 'at this place/point (in time),' as I have done above. Another possible rendering is an 'indicative of purpose,' since Rimbert goes on to explain the reason Ansgar departed, as in 'for this alone/for none other than this reason/for this sole purpose' but only derives this meaning in conjunction with the rest of the phrase not quoted here. The text supports either reading: An indicative of purpose makes good sense because Rimbert's *causa scribendi* in this passage is to explain why, this in this instance, an exception to the Benedictine Rule was warranted while a temporal or even locative rendering also fits since Rimbert seeks to refer to a specific moment in time at a specific location.

[164] Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 4.

[165] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter XIII; Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii*, chapter XIII, 35: "*hanc rationem sanctissimo papae Gregorio intimari fecit confirmandam. Quod etiam ipse tam decreti sui auctoritate quam etiam pallii datione more praedecessorum suorum roboravit atque ipsum in praesentia constitutum legatum in omnibus circumquaque gentibus Sueonum sive Danorum necnon etiam Slavorum aliarumque in aquilonis partibus gentium … et ante corpus et confessionem sancti Petri apostoli publicam euangelizandi tribuit auctoritatem.*"

doubt on the veracity of this legateship, but even his skeptical eye finds legitimacy in Pope Nicholas I awarding Ansgar the pallium in 864[166] and granting him his archbishop status: "In order that Anskar may be authoritatively established as the first archbishop of the Northalbingians… and we appoint our son Anskar as our legate amongst all the surrounding races of Swedes, Danes and Slavs, and amongst all others living in those parts, … and we grant him authority to preach the gospel openly."[167]

Subsequent archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen would also benefit from grants of special privilege, conferring a unique position upon them which facilitated the spread of Christianity. According to Adam of Bremen, Pope Agapetus reaffirmed all the privileges granted to Hamburg Bremen by previous popes (Gregory IV, Nicholas I, Sergius II, and others). "To him [Adaldag] was also conceded by virtue of apostolic authority the right to consecrate bishops as papal legates to Denmark as well as to the other peoples of the North."[168] This privilege granted to Adaldag allowed Hamburg-Bremen to gain its first suffragan sees, granting it a superior status to nearby competing dioceses. Likewise, Helmold records that Adalbert, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, had "Pope Leo, well disposed and agreeable to his wishes in all matters," which allowed him to "function… as papal legate in all the northern kingdoms, to wit, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway"[169] Similarly, Otto of Bamberg received his elevated position from Papal actions, enabling him to become the missionary to the Pomeranians. "He was consecrated bishop in the city of Anagni by Pope Paschal [II]," he "acquired the abbey called Münchsmünster" by a

[166] Knibbs, *Ansgar, Rimbert, and the Forged Foundations*, 86.
[167] Rimbert, *Life of St. Ansgar*, chapter XXIII.
[168] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 57.
[169] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 95.

papal privilege of Pope Innocent II, and "he had received permission to preach from Pope Calixtus II of blessed memory."[170]

The turn toward the Baltic Crusades, however, appears to occur with less papal support. Albert of Buxhövden operated with only the distant blessing of Pope Innocent III and was able to raise crusading armies without papal permission due to his ties to German kings who elevated him to the status of a Prince-Bishop, granting him an alternative method of mobilizing troops. "The bishop Albert also was successful in finding the support of various leaders to the Livonian crusaders, as well as in the recruitment of warriors who mostly originated from Northern Germany. He crossed the Baltic Sea at least 27 times in order to find and transport new crusaders to Livonia."[171] The crusading orders which he initiated operated counter to the papal missionary policy of the time (see below) and "ignored the principles of the Cistercian missionaries, the missionary agenda of the Curia, as well as canonical laws dealing with the treatment of new Christians."[172] Thus, as state involvement increased, papal support of conversion efforts may have eventually become less essential, but especially in the early days, it was a prerequisite necessity not only for the possibility of, but especially for the success of any missionary journeys or sustained attempts at Christianization.

V. The Coercive Turn: "the increasingly warlike character of the process of Christianization"[173]

[170] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 105, 118.
[171] Kaljundi, "The Baltic Crusades and the Culture of Memory," 29; Artis Aboltins and Santa Jansone, "Bishops in Livonia: Crusades in the East Baltic Region," *Medieval Warfare* 6, no. 3 (2016): 42–46; Marek Tamm, "Mission and Mobility: The Travels and Networking of Bishop Albert of Riga (c. 1165–1229)," in *Making Livonia: Actors and Networks in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Anu Mänd and Marek Tamm (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 17–47.
[172] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 152.
[173] Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 1.

The present study is far from the first attempt to identify a development in the High Middle Ages toward violence and coercion surrounding the crusades. Classic works including R. I. Moore's *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* laid the groundwork for such an observation. Moore taught historians decades ago to "think of western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a persecuting society. [And that] Europe had not exhibited the habit of persecution to anything like the same degree before the eleventh century."[174] Moore famously articulated

> "that the eleventh and twelfth centuries saw what has turned out to be a permanent change in Western society: … deliberate and socially sanctioned violence began to be directed, *through established governmental, judicial and social institutions*, against groups of people defined by general characteristics such as race, religion or way of life; and that membership of such groups in itself came to be regarded as justifying these attacks."[175]

Baltic Slavs came to be included in this category of othered peoples against whom habitual persecution in the form of the perpetual crusade was normalized by the 13th century. It lies beyond the scope of this paper whether the Baltic Slavs were targets of said persecution for ethnic, racial, social, or religious reasons, or some mix of all of them, but that question remains open for further research.[176] However, the present study is concerned with attending to alterations in missionary strategy and the developing forms of support conversion efforts in Northern Europe received from institutions and articulating a relationship between the forms of

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[174] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*, 2nd ed (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) vi.
[175] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 4.
[176] For attempts to answer this question, see Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen, "The Making of New Cultural Landscapes in the Medieval Baltic," in *Medieval Christianity in the North: New Studies*, ed. Kirsi Salonen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and Torstein Jørgensen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 121–54; Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen, "Saints, Sinners & Civilisers - or Converts, Cowards & Conquerors: Cultural Encounters in the Medieval Baltic," in *Cultural Encounters During the Crusades*, ed. Kurt Villads Jensen, Kirsi Salonen, and Helle Vogt (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2013); Shami Ghosh, "Conquest, Conversion, and Heathen Customs in Henry of Livonia's Chronicon Livoniae and the Livländische Reimchronik," *Crusades* 11, no. 1 (December 31, 2012): 87–108; Stanisław Rosik and Anna Tyszkiewicz, *The Slavic Religion in the Light of 11th- and 12th-Century German Chronicles (Thietmar of Merseburg, Adam of Bremen, Helmold of Bosau): Studies on the Christian Interpretation of Pre-Christian Cults and Beliefs in the Middle Ages* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2020); Cordelia Hess and Jonathan Adams, eds., *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

support and the strategies of mission. The events of the Baltic Crusades which saw a whole new kind of missionary bishop, exemplified in the person of Albert of Buxhövden, and new strategies of missionizing, provide further nuance to Moore's thesis that a persecuting society had formed.

This study joins Winroth and Gelting in noticing "the huge, *peaceful* success of Christianization" in Scandinavia.[177] It has observed the presentation of early missionary bishops in the sources as solitary itinerant preachers relying primarily on the rhetoric of their preaching and sometimes royal gifts to win over converts. By attending to the lack of certain kinds of institutional support available to the missionaries in the 9th-11th centuries, like armed escort or military force, it has established a gradual increase in the application of force and violence to the conversion effort. The first missionary to Scandinavia, Ansgar, acted as a lone missionary figure and like other Carolingian missionaries, "appear[s] to act within established norms" in order to peacefully win over local leaders.[178] The first missionary to the Baltic Slavs in modern-day Poland, Otto of Bamberg, although he traveled with military escort for safety, and once employed the threat of force from the Duke's army, carried out "the work of persuasion (preaching, discussion) in an environment free of fear, without haste, and accompanied by belief."[179] Klaus Guth even insists that "the missionary methods and motives of Bishop Otto I of Bamberg, on the other hand, originated from reasoning in the tradition of Pope Gregory the Great," a tradition which birthed "the liberal medieval variant of group and personal conversion. … It served the *peaceful* establishment of a missionary church of Pomerania."[180] He cites Ebo's *Ottovita* in which the conversion-by-force episode is absent, and in which instead, Pomeranian

[177] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 101. Emphasis added; Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*.
[178] Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 125; Wood, "Christians and Pagans," 58.
[179] Klaus Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 19. Emphasis added.
[180] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 15, 19, 20.

Duke Wratisław says "it is not my task to force you to adopt this religion, for God, as I heard from the mouth of my lord and bishop, does not wish for services acquired by force, but only those that are voluntary…"[181]

The present study has preferred the Prüfening monk's account of Otto's life since recent research finds it to be the earliest of the three, and a fairly accurate portrayal of missionary life on the frontier. But even following the more coercive of the two narratives, Guth's basic distinction between crusader and missionary in which "the missionary is an apostle whereas the crusader remains a warrior" holds true. Despite the Duke's single threat of violence, Otto does, like Ansgar, Rimbert, and Unni, rely upon the favor of local leaders for permission to preach and consistently employ the power of his rhetoric to effect conversion in his audience. Guth and the Prüfening monk emphasize "his great qualities as a preacher and missionary with a knowledge of languages [which] were an additional benefit… [by which he accomplished] the medieval form of mission without direct compulsion."[182] While Guth may overstate "the peaceful Pomeranian mission" given the inclusion of the Prüfening monk's account and its one anecdote of the application of force, Otto still emerges as a medial figure, one who still practiced a pre-crusade missional strategy in the tradition of Gregory the Great, but availed himself of newly available forms of institutional support when necessary, namely the willingness of political elites to threaten the use of military force, as we have seen.[183]

Continuing the pattern of peaceful initial efforts, the first missionary journey to Livonia, that of the Augustinian Canon Meinhard, "was an entirely peaceful enterprise, relying solely on

[181] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 15.
[182] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 19.
[183] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 18.

preaching to the local Livish population as a means to conversion."[184] The Christianization of Scandinavia was largely complete before the development of crusading ideology, thanks in part to crucial areas of compatibility between Old Norse Paganism and the model of Christianity offered to them, the role of the leader in Viking society, and the agency of Scandinavian kings "willingly, indeed eagerly embracing European civilization."[185] But other parts of Northern Europe would witness the coercive turn in the spread of Christianity identified by Moore as "the formation of a persecuting society,"[186] by Bartlett as "colonization and conquest,"[187] by Guth as "the development of crusade ideology,"[188] by Gelting as "military campaigns of appalling brutality,"[189] and by Murray as "the increasingly warlike character of the process of Christianization."[190] Gelting has usefully suggested that to understand the "swift and essentially peaceful conversion of the greater part of northern and eastern Europe in the decades around the first Millennium," "historians have been looking in the wrong direction" and that rather than examining "conditions in the converting realms," one must attend critically to transformations within Latin Christendom itself, namely, "the political and cultural model of Christianity that was proposed," and the nature of the institutions that it represented.[191] Similarly, I suggest that understanding the coercive turn and the transformation of the varieties of institutional support of the Northern Mission which accompanied it requires an investigation of internal changes within Latin Christendom, such as the development of canon law, crusade ideology, and the increasing power of the state.

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[184] Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 1.
[185] Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia*, 8.
[186] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, viii.
[187] Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change*.
[188] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 20.
[189] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 102.
[190] Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 1.
[191] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 102, 128.

1. The Status of Bishops

In explaining the sudden success of Christianization in Scandinavia around the year 1000, Michael Gelting points to several plausible causal factors. He identifies a transformation in the figure of the bishop, who began to demonstrate "a strong valorization of political action in the secular world."[192] The rise of this politically savvy, classically educated, courtier bishop who was trained in imperial diplomacy and who maintained intimate ties to monarchs, as we have seen embodied in the figures of Otto of Bamberg and Adaldag Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, was not lost on foreign kings in the pagan North. Gelting rightly identifies Poppo as an early instance of this transformation in the figure of the missionary bishop. In him, "Harald was confronted with a churchman of a very different brand from the predominantly monastic missionaries who had visited Denmark during the preceding generations."[193] Sarah Thomas has recently edited a book length study on the changing roles and networks of medieval bishops, and comes to similar conclusions, noticing the increasingly political character of their social networks, which had significant ramifications for their evangelization efforts.[194] A Poppo or an Adaldag could negotiate on the behalf of kings and represent the full weight of imperial power in a way that a Boniface, Ebbo of Rheims, Ansgar, or Unni never could. Perhaps Albert of Buxhövden, a prince-bishop, can also be seen as the culmination of this process, the ultimate form of a bishop with intensifying secular power.

2. The Power of the King

[192] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 124.
[193] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 123.
[194] Sarah Elizabeth Thomas, *Bishops' Identities, Careers, and Networks in Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

Gelting also usefully identifies "an increasing exaltation of the role of the king and emperor as a secular vicar of Christ on earth… [who] had the right to govern the Church as well as secular society, even if he had no authority in purely spiritual matters. The full development of this ideology was yet to come, under Otto III and Henry II, but the essential elements were already present in the early 960s" under Otto I.[195] He notes that these developments were not entirely new, but they were exacerbated in historically significant ways in the Ottonian period and despite the gaps between secular power in theory and secular power in practice, "the growing emphasis on the sacred nature of Ottonian kingship must have been an attractive model."[196] The ideological shift Gelting identifies which theoretically granted Otto I power in both the sacred and secular realms fits nicely with the historical record, since Otto I was the king most actively involved in conversion efforts according to Adam and Helmold, whose narratives always looked back favorably upon the days when the frontier church benefitted from his support.[197] This development within Latin Christendom, both political and ideological, meant new forms of institutional support, political, military, financial, etc., became available to missionary bishops, which altered strategies of conversion, as we saw above in the case of Adaldag. The alteration of missionary strategies became more obvious when Helmold recorded the institutional support drying up and the growth of the church stagnating under kings who were unlike Otto I.

For Harald Klak, conversion meant an alliance with Louis the Pious who could help reinstate him to his kingdom from which he had been driven by rival kings in Denmark. Similarly, for Harald Bluetooth, whose father inaugurated a new dynasty in Danish kingship and

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[195] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 124.
[196] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 125.
[197] Helmold of Bosau, *Chronicle of the Slavs*, 78; Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 55.

still had many political rivals, the strength of the imperial Otto may have been attractive. But for many pagan kings, the increasing secular and spiritual power of kingship within Latin Christendom might have constituted a powerful disincentive for conversion. In instances where the political model of Christianity proposed to them meant permanent subjection to the Holy Roman Empire, a military enemy, kings may have strategically elected not to convert until it benefitted them and their realms. For example, when the city of Szczecin resisted Otto of Bamberg's preaching and the Duke threatened the apply military means, he clarified that "if they consented to listen to the bishop and to receive the word of God … they would have perpetual peace, just like other Christians, provided that they did not refuse in any way to preserve their faith toward him and to go with him against his enemies, as often as his private necessity or the utility of the *res publica* demanded it."[198] In this case conversion explicitly carried with it a political component, namely, vassalage, in which the converted populace would swear fealty to the Christian Duke and would rally to his defense and supply themselves as soldiers in his wars. Doubtless some groups found this arrangement to be not in their best interest. A significant faction of the people of Szczecin appear to have been skeptical about the benefits of conversion since the source tells us that the people gathered and "inquired diligently which of the two they should choose. There were many speeches in favour [*sic*] of one or the other."[199] In the end, they only elected to convert "provided that they would be safe henceforth from the slaughter, fires and other hostilities of the sort they had often endured before from the same duke."[200] However, some of the Slavic tribes who were slowest to convert likely perceived the growing power of German kingship as a growing threat.

[198] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 126.
[199] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 126.
[200] "The Life of Bishop Otto of Bamberg," trans. Lyon, 126.

3. The Doctrine of Crusade and the Codification of Canon Law

Klaus Guth draws our attention to another relevant development within Latin Christendom, namely the development of canon law. “The canon law of the High Middle Ages points to the close link between worldly and religious power in the German Empire. The German mission to the East in the twelfth century is the expression of the official authority of pope and emperor. It finds its legitimacy above all in canon law.”[201] Guth establishes the preceding claim with reference to the canon law phrase “*extra ecclesiam non est imperium*” which was used to justify militant expansion of Christendom in the High Middle Ages.[202] We have already identified the turn toward coercive strategies of mission in the narrative of Helmold, an eyewitness to crusade himself, as the moment when Bernard of Clairvaux enters the scene. Bernard is a seminal figure in the formation and popularization of crusade ideology which spread via his sermons. He preached the second crusade in Germany, eliciting the response of Conrad III, but he would also go on to preach the Wendish Crusade of 1147 against the Western Slavs, articulating a perpetual war against them "until such a time as, by God's help, they shall either be converted or deleted."[203] By the time of Otto of Bamberg’s missionary journeys to the Pomeranians, “the crusade as a war against the heathens was a firm concept in canon law.”[204] Both the First Crusade (1096) and the original call for crusade against the Wends issued from Magdeburg (1107) found supportive echoes in canon law which facilitated them.[205] However,

[201] Guth, “The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I,” 14.
[202] Guth, “The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I,” 14.
[203] Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, 53.
[204] Guth, “The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I,” 14.
[205] Dragnea, “Divine Vengeance and Human Justice in The Wendish Crusade of 1147.”

despite this concurrent development, "the Pomeranian mission of the Bamberg bishop remained unaffected by such crusade ideology."[206]

In crusades generally, conquering and subjugation was at first done by lay knights, while the clean-up work of proselytizing, establishing permanent churches, and administration of sacraments to the conquered peoples was the duty of priests after the fact.[207] Such an order of operations had become standard practice and the default strategy of mission for the two crusading orders active in Livonia, the Teutonic Order and the Livonian Sword-Brothers.[208] Favreau-Lilie has demonstrated how the missionary strategy toward the Baltic Slavs radically shifted. "Early attempts for a peaceful and nonviolent mission by the Cistercians are evidence in the 1180s… [that adhered to] canonical laws [and] … the missionary policies of the papacy which above all wanted to safeguard the liberties of the converted populace."[209] The Cistercian strategy followed the Augustinian principle for voluntary conversion which had been canonized in Gratian's *Decretum*: "one must therefore proceed in such a way that those to be converted want to follow us (in our faith) by reason of words of good sense and gentleness and do not flee from us … Therefore, my brother, inflame their hearts with exhortations, as best you can…"[210] Mienhard had employed this same strategy in his early attempts to convert the Livonians. However, the canonization of crusade ideology conflicted with canon law stipulations for missionizing peacefully. The development internal to Latin Christendom of crusade doctrine rooted in the authority of canon law made new forms of institutional support available to

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[206] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 20.
[207] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 14.
[208] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 147-154.
[209] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 147, 149, 152.
[210] Guth, "The Pomeranian Missionary Journeys of Otto I," 15, quoting Gratian, *Decretum* 1, distinctio 45, ch. 3, in: PL, vol. 187, cols. 233-34. Lotter, 35, n. 90; And Gregory I, *Registrum*, letter 15, in: MGH Epist., vol. 2 (1899), bk. 13, 383.

conversion efforts, namely the possibility of creating crusading orders like the Sword-Brothers and raising lay armies, and a reversal of the usual order of operations of Christianization.

Conversion had previously happened first, accompanied by belief, and brought about via preaching and persuasion, and it might have entailed political alliances or subjugation to the German state after the fact. But after 1200 the process happened in the reverse order. Subjugation came first and was only then followed by missionizing and Christianization. Favreau-Lilie describes how the crusading orders, and their strategies of conversion replaced the Cistercian model just as Albert of Buxhövden so rapidly replaced the peaceful efforts of Meinhard after succeeding him. "The example provided by the Cistercian mission to the Livs and the Prussians was unacceptable to the Teutonic Knights and to the Livonian Sword-Brothers before them. The principle of a mission based solely on preaching and patient example that worked toward the voluntary conversion of the individual was irreconcilable with their idea that only forcible mass baptism of the subjugated pagans could spell a clear victory for Christendom."[211] She attributes this fundamental incompatibility mainly to the fact that the first priority of the crusading orders was land acquisition, since they were promised one third of whatever they conquered to rule over themselves as petty lords. As such, they sought to exploit the free labor of subjected peoples to build their castles which would become manors in their fiefdoms, a kind of exploitation which canon law explicitly prohibited for fellow Christians but tolerated for pagans. Thus, the Teutonic Knights and Sword-Brothers actively refused baptism to some who requested it in order to go on exploiting them more conveniently.[212] The primary goal of territorial expansion actually came into conflict then with the secondary goal of Christianization in many cases. Ostensibly, the

[211] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 148-149.
[212] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 149.

strategy of mission remained that of proselytizing and establishing permanent churches from which to minister to the subjugated peoples: work for clergy to carry out which crusading orders did not concern themselves with. But the irreconcilable conflict between the strategies of the crusading orders and the Cistercian preachers resulted in the Cistercians being utterly replaced by the Dominicans who were to carry out the post-conquest Christianization, and who had fewer quibbles with forced baptism.[213] In the end Favreau-Lilie concludes that "for the Livonian Sword-Brothers and the Teutonic Order, the mission was in fact only worthwhile if it helped secure their territorial rule."[214]

The revision in missionary strategy from the peaceful conversion of Scandinavia and the attempts at a peaceful conversion of Livonia by Meinhard and the Cistercians toward a coercive approach was only made possible by certain preconditions in Latin Christendom. These prerequisite developments included the codification of crusade ideology into canon law which conflicted with earlier Gregorian and Augustinian policies about voluntary conversion.[215] The doctrine of crusade was then spread and popularized by figures like Bernard of Clairvaux, without whom crusade as a new form of institutional support of the conversion effort in Northern Europe would not have been available. Albert of Buxhövden would draw upon these new forms of institutional support in unprecedented ways, creating the Sword-Brothers, amassing armies, converting the Livonians by force, and by his power as prince, promising to lay knights "a share of the booty and [the chance to] become lords in their part (one third) of the conquered regions."[216] Thus, the development of canon law and crusade ideology join the list of internal

[213] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 153.
[214] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 154.
[215] Tamm, "How to Justify a Crusade?".
[216] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 147.

developments within Latin Christendom that enabled new forms of institutional support and altered missionary strategies, and serve as causal factors in the coercive turn in the Christianization process.

VI. Conclusion: Towards a New Conversion Narrative

Scholars have asked many questions concerning the conversion of Northern Europe to Christianity, and many questions remain open to further research, among them how ethnic difference effected perceptions of the 'other' beyond the frontiers of Latin Christendom and how these perceptions altered missionary strategy.[217] More could be said about regional variation in the processes of Christianization, since substantial differences exist even between the conversions of Sweden and Norway for example, between coastal and inland regions, or between individual towns within Pomerania.[218] The field could benefit from more prosopographical studies on missionaries like that of Alan Murray's analysis of 32 individuals from the chronicle of Henry of Livonia.[219] Network Analysis has also proved a fruitful and underutilized approach, attempted only recently in the Scandinavian context by Søren Sindbæk who has produced a social network analysis of all instances of movement of people between places in the *Vita Anskarii*[220] and in the Baltic context by Marek Tamm who conducted a social network analysis of

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[217] See Christian Lübke, "Adam of Bremen's View at the Polabian Slavs," in *Authorship, Worldview, and Identity in Medieval Europe*, ed. Christian Raffensperger (Routledge, 2022), 201–18; and Torstein Jørgensen, "'The Land of the Norwegians Is the Last in the World': A Mid-Eleventh-Century Description of the Nordic Countries from the Pen of Adam of Bremen," in *The Edges of the Medieval World*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Juhan Kreem (Budapest: Department of Medieval Studies and Central European University Press and Centre for Medieval Studies, Tallinn University, 2009), 46–54.

[218] See Michael Müller-Wille, "From Paganism to Christianity: A Regional Study - The South-West Baltic," in *Three Studies on Vikings and Christianization*, ed. Magnus Rindal, KULTs Skriftserie 28 (Oslo: Research Council of Norway, 1994), 44–65.

[219] See Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 353-366; and Murray, "Prosopography," in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades* cit., 109-129.

[220] Sindbæk, "The Small World of the Vikings," 59-74.

Albert of Buxhövden's many journeys to and from the mission field and the ties which he activated to raise armies.[221]

The present study has examined the various forms of backing that conversion efforts in Northern Europe received from institutions within and without Latin Christendom. Many practical realities were necessary for missionary journeys and Christianization attempts, from financial support and provision of transportation, to legal and spiritual privileges, and even military escort. In order for these conversion efforts to occur in the first place, let alone achieve success, some or all of these forms of support were required. Some scholars, namely Wood and Sawyer, have briefly acknowledged these practical realities, but few historians have attempted any systematic study of support and backing in the missionary endeavors in Northern Europe, let alone such a diachronic and comparative analysis as the present study has mounted. By extending the analysis across various chronicles and saints' lives from the conversion period, rich with detail on the realities of medieval missionary life on the periphery, gradual changes in the available forms of institutional support and missionary strategy have emerged. The growth of imperial power under Otto I and Emperor Lothar III availed conversion efforts of increased levels of political support, leading to rapid bursts of progress for the northern mission. Conversely, according to Helmold, the church foundered under Ottos II and III whose attention was diverted to their Italian wars, not directed toward the missionary church, and likewise, Helmold laments the lack of available imperial support in the power vacuum left by Lothar III's death. Any attempt to explain the conversion of Northern Europe must grapple with the practical questions of the resources available to missionaries.

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[221] Tamm, "Mission and Mobility: The Travels and Networking of Bishop Albert of Riga," 17-47. See also *Making Livonia: Actors and Networks in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Anu Mänd and Marek Tamm (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

Gelting, Winroth, and Urbańczyk all gesture to the fact that "social élites of pagan societies were aware of the political advantages offered by Christianity. We may imagine," Urbańczyk notes, "that they admired the concrete results of its influence and realized its socio-technical potential."[222] In some cases, particularly in Scandinavia, this led to voluntary conversions, often driven by kings, chieftains, and the native mercantile class.[223] In other cases, local elites perceived Christianity and the ideas of empire it came to represent as a clear threat to their sovereignty. The development of crusade ideology and its grounding in canon law made available to the conversion efforts new forms of institutional support, namely lay armies, and crusading orders, which resulted in new strategies of mission, where catechism became secondary to conquest. Particularly in Prussia and Livonia, where missionary strategy had been altered by the hunger for land of the Teutonic Knights and the Sword-Brothers, Christianity came to imply "exacting labour [*sic*] service from the conquered peoples" because "the military orders believed that their rule in the conquered territories could only be adequately established if they exacted labour and extraordinary taxes from the new Christians."[224] Just as "explanations for the sudden spate of 'national' conversions around the year 1000" may lie with "the political and cultural model of Christianity that was proposed to" the converting realms, the explanation for local *resistance* to conversion in the Baltic lands around the year 1200 may also lie with the new political model of Christianity that was offered.[225]

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[222] Przemysław Urbańczyk, "The Politics of Conversion in North Central Europe," in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, Ad 300-1300*, ed. Martin Carver (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2003), 22.
[223] See Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings* (1982); Else Roesdahl and David M. Wilson, eds., *From Viking to Crusader: The Scandinavians and Europe, 800-1200* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992); Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide, ed., *The Viking Age as a Period of Religious Transformation: The Christianisation of Norway from Ad 560 - 1150/1200*, Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).
[224] Favreau-Lilie, "Mission to the Heathen in Prussia and Livonia," 149, 152.
[225] Gelting, "Poppo's Ordeal," 102.

A comparative analysis of the contemporary accounts of the conversion of Northern Europe has offered significant insight into the circumstances and realities of missionary life on the frontiers of Latin Christendom. We have glimpsed a wide array of interactions between Christians and Pagans at the peripheries of Europe. Attending to the question of institutional support has not only revealed what enabled missionary journeys but also what differentiated the successful ones from those which produced fewer conversions and failed to effect lasting social change. But most significantly, varieties of institutional support have served as a window giving us glimpses into developments within Latin Christendom which altered missionary strategy and resources available for Christianization. In particular, the transformation of the role of the bishop, the increase in imperial power, and the codification of crusade ideology in canon law have helped us explain what Alan Murray termed "the increasingly warlike character of the process of Christianization."[226] As he noted concerning the mission to Livonia, the most "remarkable feature of these events is how much the character of Christianization changed during this period." The present study joins Murray but extends the period of analysis across time in order to notice this gradual change in character from the remarkably peaceful conversion of Scandinavia all the way to the Baltic Crusades. This period saw the missionary bishop develop from the likes of Ansgar, little more than an itinerant preacher with only the nominal backing of a king and pope in the 9th century, to Otto of Bamberg, a well-connected and resourced missionary who relied on his rhetoric and knowledge of local tongues but also had access to secular armed forces to protect him, and ultimately to the likes of Albert of Buxhövden, the Prince-Bishop of Livonia, himself the archetype of warlike Christianization methods.

[226] Murray, "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia," 1.

These findings emerge as significant for the historical field on several levels. First, the preceding analysis employed a New Institutional approach, one which attends closely to the constraining and enabling effects of institutions on individual and groups behaviors, thereby explaining historical events with complex causality as well as changes over time. Such an analysis highlighted the inherent connection between the political events and circumstances within Latin Christendom which shaped the conversion process of regions beyond the borders of Christendom. The exact same "political events that we read about in the conversion histories" which Birgit Sawyer dismissively claims "had little to do with … the conversion to Christianity," constitute essential steps in the transformation of institutions within Europe.[227] These same institutions, through their material, political, and spiritual support, were indispensable to the conversion itself. Thus, a close reading of the chronicles and *vitæ* that document the conversion of Northern Europe through the lens of institutional support adds another side of the story to abundant recent scholarship which attempts to downplay the role of the German church in the conversion.[228] Much post-colonial scholarship has chafed at the idea of imperial influence being responsible for the Christianization or Europeanization of Scandinavian or Slavic regions, and hence has opted to emphasize the agency of native actors in these two processes. Excellent historians have contributed to this picture, but since missionary journeys did happen and did leave their indelible mark on European history, both sides of the story must be told. Part of the significance of this study, therefore, derives from re-ascribing a causal role to the conversion efforts emanating from within Christendom and the institutions which backed them.

[227] Birgit Sawyer, "Scandinavian Conversion Histories," 59.
[228] See Stefan Brink, "New Perspectives on the Christianization of Scandinavia," and Haki Antonsson, "The Conversion and Christianization of Scandinavia: A Critical Review of Recent Scholarly Writings," for excellent overviews of this literature, some of which goes as far as to deny the role of missionaries in the process.

This study has also contributed to current scholarship on medieval missionaries and their experiences on the frontiers of Christendom by filling a gap from where Ian Wood's seminal study *The Missionary Life* ended (c. 1000) to the point that Alan Murray's "Catholic Missionaries in the Evangelization of Livonia" began (c. 1200). As this analysis showed by comparing conversion narratives across the period and attending to developments in missionary strategy, it was these crucial centuries in which the character of Christianization witnessed the most significant transformations. By comparing two case studies, namely, the comparatively peaceful conversion of Scandinavia and the violent conversion of the Baltic Slavs, respectively on either end of these two centuries, the relevance of this era for writing missionary history became apparent. Due to internal developments in European institutions and the increasing involvement of the state in conversion efforts, the resources available to missionaries, and thus the missionary life, were altered most significantly during our period of analysis.

The findings derive more significance by demonstrating the utility of the primary source base for historical work. Much scholarship over the past century has begun to view these chronicles and *Vitæ*, in many cases the only sources of information documenting the conversion of these regions, as merely literary constructions or even as fictionalized accounts. Much of this literature overcompensates for the 'distortions' that the positionalities of medieval authors introduced into the sources, abandoning all attempts to use information from these conversion narratives as evidence in causal arguments about how the Christianization process happened. But the present study has used information from the chronicles and saints' lives to answer practical questions about the kinds of support and backing which made conversion efforts possible. In so doing, this study hopes to salvage some of the usefulness of these and other medieval sources. Now that excellent source criticism abounds, generated in reaction to overly accepting

scholarship of previous centuries, these medieval texts deserve revisiting. Perhaps recovering information about historical events and the uncovering the chronicler's own view of those events need not be mutually exclusive. The author hopes these findings pave the way for future research on conversion processes, missionary strategy, institutional support, and medieval narratives of Christianization.

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